BEST OF THE YEAR

TOTAL Guitar

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LEARN TO PLAY

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SAD BUT TRUE

OASIS
HALF THE WORLD AWAY

RAINBOW
SINCE YOU BEEN GONE

THE PLAYERS, RIFFS, SOLOS AND GEAR OF 2022!

PLAY LIKE
Jack White
Tim Henson
Eric Gales
+ more

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John Frusciante
Matt Bellamy
Steve Vai

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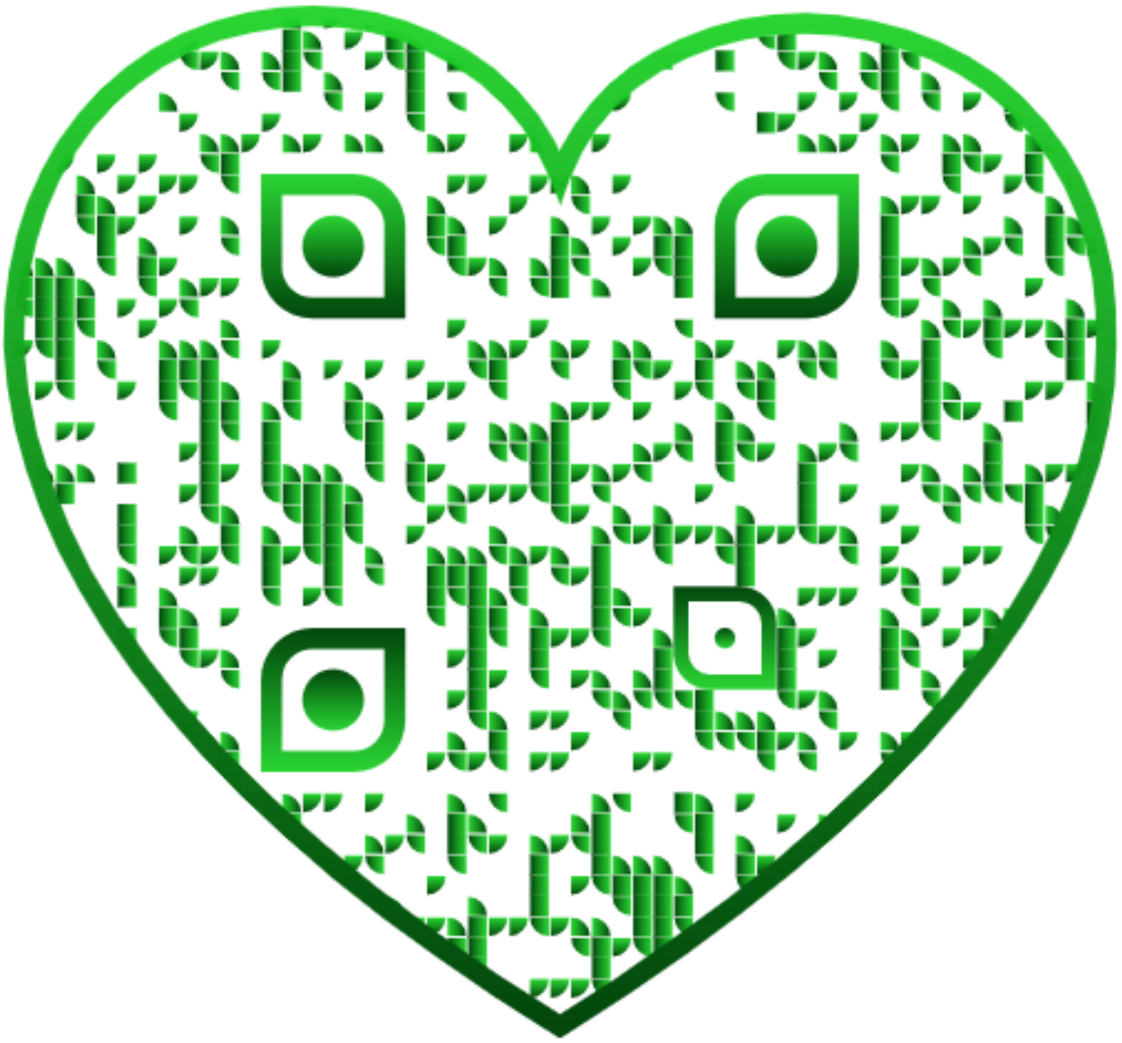
EPIPHONE 335



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TOTAL Guitar

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Welcome...

In this issue we celebrate The Best of the Year – the players, the riffs, the solos, the albums, the songs and, of course, the gear.

A personal highlight for me was witnessing John Frusciante's performance with the Red Hot Chili Peppers this summer at the London Stadium. John's playing remains as powerful and soulful as it ever was. He is our Guitarist of the Year, and in a major new interview beginning on page 28, he reveals how he focuses on making an emotional connection through his playing, and how he created his own tribute to one of his greatest heroes, Eddie Van Halen.

Elsewhere, we speak to two other famous guitar heroes still at the top of their game – Matt Bellamy and Steve Vai. And in our list of the top 20 Albums of the Year, there is further proof that some of the most exciting new music is being made by new generation of rising stars, including the three bands recently featured on TG's cover – Polyphia, Nova Twins and King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard.

On page 58 you can learn how to play like the stars of 2022 – from a Jack White-inspired shuffle riff to Polyphia-style tapping and harmonics. And in our rundown of the Gear of the Year, there's something for every player and every budget, big or small.

Enjoy the issue, and take a moment to reflect on these words from our Year in Guitar review: "The world is not without its struggles, but whether you want to express your frustrations or escape from them entirely, the guitar is the instrument to do it."

Chris Bird Editor

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Cover illustration Magic Torch

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Audio & Video

Find your audio and video content online at:

bit.ly/tg366audio

Type this link into a web browser on any computer, smartphone or tablet and you'll be directed to TG's website at guitarworld.com. Here you'll find all the audio and video for the issue, available to download or stream.

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We might be in the depths of an austere winter, but Jackson could well provide the tonic required with its latest X-Series versions of the iconic Dinky model. The DK3XR HSS comes popping off the rack with its shred-friendly features including the familiar doublecut body, a satin-finished maple neck capped with a 24-jumbo-fret, laurel fingerboard (with Jackson's Sharkfin inlays) and 12"-16" compound radius. Of course, it's hard to miss the Neon Pink/Caution Yellow paint jobs that are as subtle as a tear in the seat of your Spandex.

The speed machine hallmarks continue with a licensed Floyd Rose vibrato, unhindered access to the squeal-y end thanks to a contoured 'shredder's cut' at the neck heel, and at the other end we get the classic Jackson reversed headstock with six-in-line Jackson tuners.

You've probably noticed the pickups, too. These are Jackson models set in an HSS configuration to deliver chiming single coil sounds from the neck and middle, and beefy 'bucker tones from the bridge. The bright-bobbin beauts are wired to a five-position switch, along with a master volume and master tone control, and unlike your central heating, Jackson has kept this G.A.S. price low. It's available now for £489.

Words Stuart Williams **Photography** Olly Curtis

X-CCEPTABLE IN THE

UP CLOSE

Finishes

Jackson is screaming in the face of subtlety with the Neon Pink and Caution Yellow colour options, while the pink pickups provide even more eye-candy.

HSS configuration

The DK3XR has a versatile set of voices with a pair of single coils and a humbucker. These are controlled with a five-way blade, tone and volume controls.

Built for speed

The frets are jumbo, and there are 24 of 'em. The fingerboard is a compound 12"-16" radius and the satin maple neck joins the body in sleek style thanks to a 'shredder's cut' heel.

80s Jackson's affordable Dinky gets a hair-metal makeover

SCENE

YOUR NEWS IN GUITARS

ALBUM

"IT FEELS LIKE THE AMP'S ABOUT TO EXPLODE!"

THE BLUES ROCK POWER OF JARED JAMES NICHOLS, A MAN OF MANY LES PAULS...

Nothing can slow down the Les Paul-loving blues-rock force of nature that is Jared James Nichols – not even a freak accident caused by picking up a road case "the wrong way" that left him with a broken right arm, now held together by 16 screws and a metal plate. "It's pretty raw and there's a lot of bumps and bruises," he tells us – referring not to his recent injury, but to his self-titled third LP, which is released in January.

What was your sonic mission for this album?

I base everything I do off of the energy of live performance. People were starting to come up to me at shows and say, 'Man, the show was awesome – you sound so much better live than you do on your records!' That echoed in my head and I was thinking about how to get the energy across. Everything was cut to tape in an old school way – there was no tuner, no metronome, and the only overdubs were vocals and about three guitar parts.

What's your favourite moment of tone on the record?

I'm super proud of *Easy Come, Easy Go* because it's got this really cool fuzzed-out guitar sound. I remember being in the studio and playing through this '69 Marshall Super Lead turned all the way up, and using a Klon. I'd kneel in front of the amp to get feedback, and if you listen to that solo, it almost feels like the amp's about to explode!

You're a man of many Les Pauls, but which one starred the most?

I cut about 80% of the record with my 1953 Les Paul, Ole Red. Then I had a 1956 Junior, and my Dorothy guitar, which is a 1952 Les Paul. It's one of the first ever and it's called Dorothy because it really was in a tornado! It got broken and I had it fixed. I also used a Gold Glory – one of my signature guitars. The electronics in the old guitars are warmer and have a lot less attack, whereas the Gold Glory is super crisp. All the guitars had P-90s. There are no humbuckers on the record, but every guitar has its own sound.

What is it you love about P-90s?

A P-90 is the perfect middle ground between a sparkly single coil and a humbucker because it retains all the crispness and that snap, but still gets loud and p*ssed off!

In the debate of whether tone comes more from the gear or the fingers, which side are you on?

Definitely fingers! Two weeks ago, we played this festival and the guy who brought the gear had worked for Eddie Van Halen. He brought me one of Eddie's personal modded Marshalls from 1984. I plugged in and it was incredible, but I sounded like me. Having a great foundation of techniques – bending, vibrato, phrasing – is something that's unique to you. It comes down to your hands, the way you hold the guitar, the way you strike the strings. Your touch is everything. When I play with my fingers – I don't use a pick – I want those characteristics to come through.

Ellie Rogers

Photo David McCluster

GUITAR

MAESTRO PEDALS

Remember back at the start of 2022 when Gibson revived the Maestro brand? Well, as promised, the five initial pedals are now joined by five new Maestro models. Once again, the additions span a range of categories with the Titan Boost and Arcas Compressor/Sustainer taking care of the gain/dynamics, Mariner Tremolo and Orbit Phaser on the modulation front, and things get funky with the Agena Envelope Filter. As before, all five pedals share the same chassis with a three-knob/one toggle design giving control and mode switching. The Maestro range is true bypass throughout, and prices start at £149.

PEDAL

FENDER J MASCIS JAZZMASTER PICKUPS

The Dinosaur Jr man has gone signature model mad over the last few years, with a Jazzmaster, Telecaster, and his beloved Electro-Harmonix Big Muff. But for those wanting to capture the skateboarding-alt-rocker's tone on a more component level comes his new Jazzmaster pickups with Fender. These p'ups come sporting Alnico II magnets with enamel-coated magnet wire, flush-mounted pole-pieces and are wax-potted to keep them as noise-free as possible when you engage the fuzz. Given the vintage styling and design, it's no surprise that these are aimed at stacking up the gain with pedals, or yielding J-style clean/semi-clean tones, and Fender describes them as "sweeter, more vintage sound". At £150, they're a tempting upgrade for your JM guitar.

PLUGIN

ORIGIN M-EQ DRIVER

To the uninitiated, the M-EQ could appear to be another twist on the classic overdrive template. But Origin isn't content with the standard gain/volume/tone layout of so many stompers, and here it's opted to ape the EQ circuit of a much-loved Pultec studio EQ unit. Now, this isn't an exact replica of the Pultec circuit, and the long and short of it is that we get a lot of flexibility in the mid range, with three mid-frequency ranges to choose from, and the adaptive circuit (which rolls off the high end as the gain increases), it looks to offer a lot of sonic options. The Origin M-EQ is made in the UK, and is available to order now priced at £259.

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FIRST STEPS IN GUITAR...

MAJOR PENTATONIC ROCK

Paul gets 80s with some big powerchords and melodic bends

This month, Jenna and Paul have been looking at some 80s-influenced ideas for feelgood licks. And back in the day, nobody did it better than CC DeVille, guitarist for glam rock stars Poison, one of the biggest bands from the LA scene alongside Mötley Crüe and Guns N' Roses.

Every major key has a relative minor (and vice versa). The relative major is three frets up from the relative minor, so G major and E minor have the same notes. This month's examples use G major pentatonic, because the shape is familiar from the E minor pentatonic ideas we've already tried.

JENNA SCARAMANGA
Jenna has taught guitar for 15 years at music colleges, schools, and IGF summer camps. She studied with Guthrie Govan at BIMM, and was classic rock columnist for TG's sister magazine *Guitar Techniques*.

PAUL ELLIOTT
Paul has written about music since 1985 for various titles including *Sounds*, *Kerrang!*, *Q*, *MOJO* and *Classic Rock*. Among the many guitarists he has interviewed are Slash, Angus Young, Keith Richards and Jimmy Page.

JENNA SAYS...

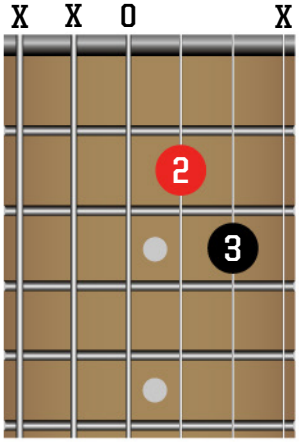
The difference between relative major and minor scales is which note sounds like 'home' when you land on it (that's the root note). When you're playing in E minor, the note 'E' is the root note. In G major, the root note is G. If you play E minor pentatonic scale from top to bottom while someone else strums an E minor chord, it will sound complete when you land on the final E. If you do the same thing while someone is strumming a G major, it will sound incomplete. Your ear wants you to finish on the root note, G. This month's licks build your bending technique with a bend and release. Make sure you keep even pressure on the string through all the bend and release so that the note keeps sustaining. Holding long bends leaves your picking hand free to adjust your hair (or wig), another essential feature of this genre.

Words Jenna Scaramanga, Paul Elliott Guitars and backing Jenna Scaramanga

TECHNIQUE CHECK...

Get your fingers in the right place and your powerchords will rock!

1 BIG BENDS
Keep fretting-fingers pressed into one 'giant finger' and power the bend with your wrist.

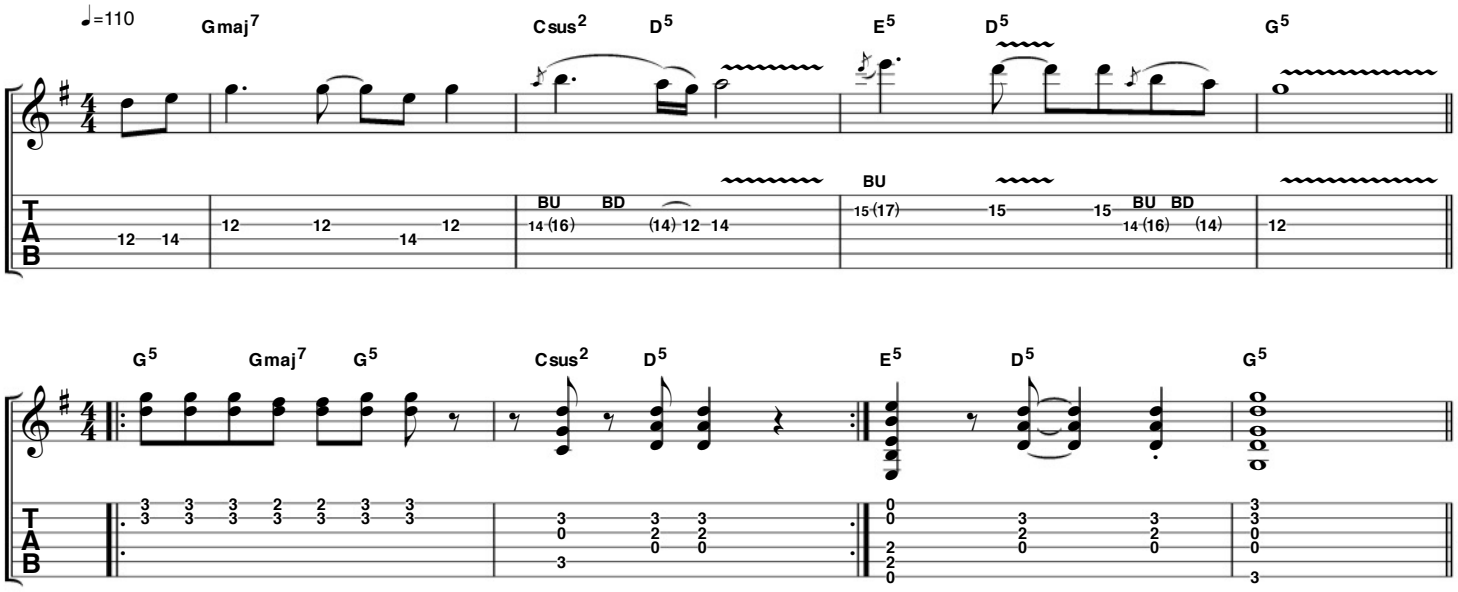


Gm Pentatonic

2 G MAJOR PENTATONIC
This shape should be familiar (it's the same as E minor pentatonic), but start and finish on G notes for a G major sound.

MAJOR PENTATONIC ROCK

BIT.LY/TG366AUDIO



Get your string bends confident before you try vibrato. When you can bend confidently, vibrato is easy: of it as a series of full strings bends and releases, rather than just a wobble.

PAUL SAYS...

In my very first lesson with Jenna, I said, with tongue in cheek, that my ultimate goal was to nail the riff that CC DeVille played in Poison's *Fallen Angel*, one of the band's biggest hits from the late 80s. It was certainly a more realistic aim than trying to master an Eddie Van Halen lick. Having worked previously on bending technique, it was fun to play around with this month's lick and develop longer bends. And as before, success in this came from utilising the 'giant finger' for optimum traction. All of this has brought back some wonderful memories from the 80s, when I had the pleasure of seeing Poison on stage in their pomp, opening for David Lee Roth, whose guitarist back in 1988 was Steve Vai. And while CC DeVille wa no match for Vai, he certainly knew how to deliver big power chords and melodic bends to maximum effect.

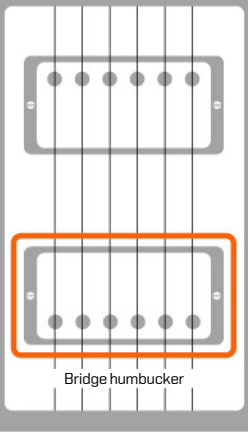
HOW TO

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN
- ✔ E minor pentatonic
- ✔ Chromatic passing notes
- ✔ Double-stops and single note riffing

RIFF OF THE MONTH

GET THE TONE

CHANNEL CLEAN



Use bridge pickup for a twangy attack and boost the mids for a retro and nasal tone. A tube clean amp such as a Fender twin would be the ideal amp for this tone. Add a short reverb to add a surf guitar-inspired slap-back to the notes.

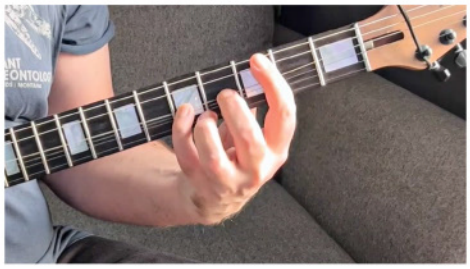
TROPICAL GOTHCLUB

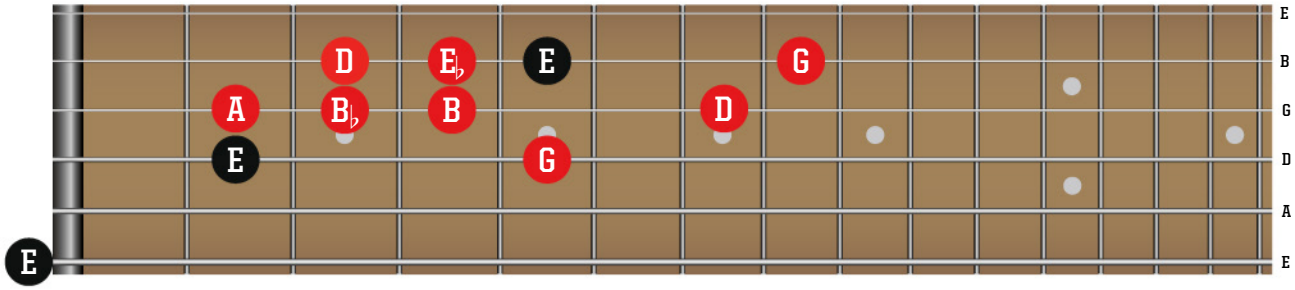
Needles

Tropical Gothclub is the self-titled debut album from Queens Of The Stone Age guitarist Dean Fertita's new solo project. Opening track *Needles* features a spooky, surf-style riff which begins with an open low E note, followed by a tritone double-stop using the notes E and B♭. Hold this position and use fingers 1 and 3 to add the B and A notes before replaying the low E note. Next play the 3 chromatic notes D E♭ and E on the 2nd string. Repeat first part of the riff, with 3 slightly different endings. For the first ending, bend the G note up and down. For ending 2, pick the G note three times and for ending 3, add a bluesy curl to the G note. The riff finishes with double-stops played on strings 2 and 3. Remember to watch our slowed down performance video to see exactly how the riff is played.

CHEAT SHEET...

Appears at: 0:08 – 0:21
Tempo: 150bpm
Key/scale: E minor pentatonic
Main techniques: Single note picking, string bending, double-stops





The main framework here is an E minor Pentatonic scale [E-G-A-B-D] played in one octave on strings 2, 3 and 4. The riff also uses the open 6th string E root, which is another octave lower. There are an additional two chromatic passing notes, E♭ and B♭, which adds a Blues scale quality. Use fingers 1 and 4 to play the 4th string notes and fingers 1, 2 and 3 to play the chromatic single notes and double-stops, finishing with a double-stop slide up to the 7th fret.

Photo Getty

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Words Amit Sharma Portrait Kevin Nixon

Wilko Johnson

1947 – 2022

The unlikely guitar hero who had a style like no other – and wielded his Tele like a machine gun

On November 21, 2022, Wilko Johnson passed away at the age of 75. The Essex-born guitarist and singer was best known for his role in Dr. Feelgood, with his electrifying guitar work on celebrated tracks such as *Back In The Night*, *Roxette* and *She Does It Right*, and his unique on-stage persona. As Paul Weller once commented: "Wilko may not be as famous as some other guitarists, but he's right up there. And there are a lot of people who'll say the same. I can hear Wilko in lots of places. It's some legacy."

Wilko was born John Peter Wilkinson on July 12, 1947 in Canvey Island, Essex, and discovered guitar almost by accident. As he told TG: "One day, I saw an electric guitar at school, and I was fascinated. I didn't know anything about music, I just liked the look of this thing. I'm left-handed, so my first electric – I don't remember its name – was left-handed. But it was terrible. The action was about an inch above the fretboard, so every time you tried to play a note, you got this kind of Chinese finger torture. I was useless. Everyone at school was better than me."

Nevertheless, he played in several local bands before studying English Language And Literature at the University Of Newcastle upon Tyne. He then went travelling in India before returning to Essex to perform in the Pigboy Charlie Band, which became the foundation for Dr. Feelgood to form in 1971.

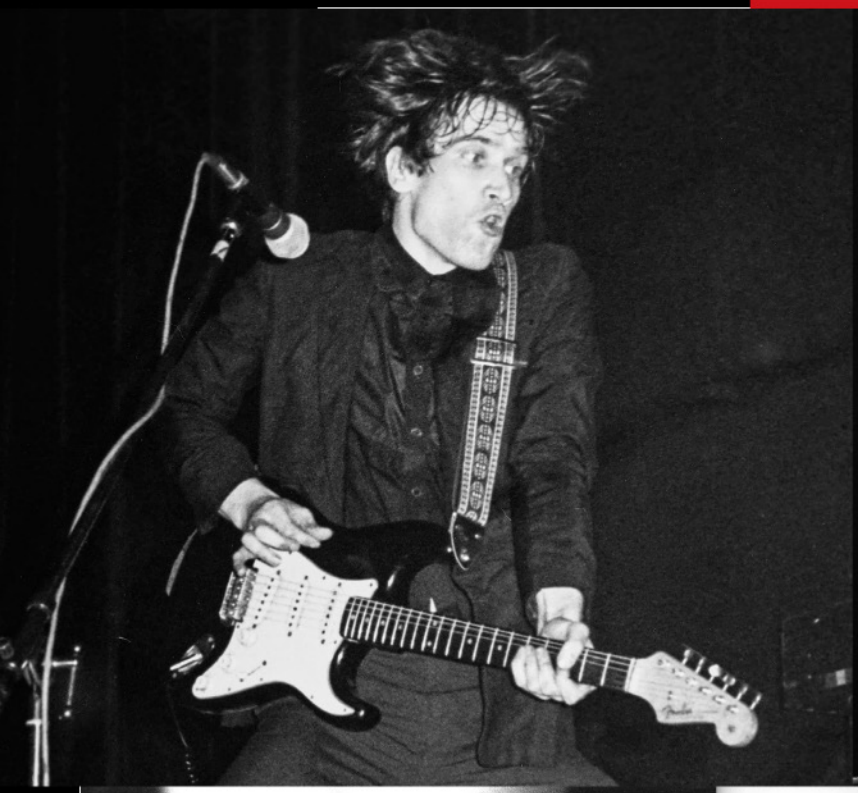
It has been reported that Wilko bought his first Fender Telecaster from a shop in Southend in 1965, which set him back £90. Around the time Dr. Feelgood were signing their first record deal, he bought a 1962 sunburst Telecaster with a white pickguard, which he had refinished in black with a red pickguard swapped in. This would become the instrument he was most known for playing – and the guitar that inspired his signature Fender Telecaster, released in 2013, which featured a 7.25" radius rosewood fingerboard with 21 vintage-style frets, three-way pickup switching, a vintage-style string-through-body bridge with three chrome-barrel saddles, and vintage-style tuners. Special in-case extras included two photos and facsimiles of the notebook pages on which Wilko penned *She Does It Right* and other Dr. Feelgood hits. As he said when the signature was released: "It's great to know people will be able to play an instrument just like the one that has served me so well throughout my career."

There were many reasons why Wilko Johnson ended up becoming hugely influential within the UK's pub rock scene and the wave of punk that soon followed. His appearance certainly left a long-lasting impression wherever he went, thanks to that thousand-yard stare, the iconic 'machine gun' poses with his guitar raised up to shoulder level and the unforgettable 'duck walks' across the stage while suited and booted in black. But it was his no-nonsense raw and aggressive tone that inspired so many who came after him – embracing the ear-piercing twang of a Telecaster while also adding more warmth and percussive punch with his fingers instead of a plectrum. It was a style unlike any other, fusing rhythm and lead parts into one towering guitar sound that, especially for its time, felt more like two players going head-to-head than the work of one single axeman. It was this Bo Diddley-inspired approach that became the driving force behind Dr. Feelgood's first four albums – *Down By The Jetty*, *Malpractice*, live record *Stupidity* and *Sneakin' Suspicion* – released between 1975 and 1977.

"When we started Dr. Feelgood, we wanted to excite audiences," Wilko told TG in 2016. "Our singer Lee Brilleaux was an absolute natural: he had a kind of nervous energy, that was his personality. And when he got on stage, there was a kind of violence about him. I took my cue from that, and bounced off Lee. We found out that if you're playing rock 'n' roll, whizzing about a bit and holding your guitar like you're shooting a machine gun, then it excites audiences. That's purely what it was about. The guitar makes a good pretend machine gun. It's built for that."

After creative differences with his bandmates came to a head during the sessions for *Sneakin' Suspicion*, Wilko's final album with the group, he stated he was given his marching orders and his tenure in Dr. Feelgood came to an abrupt end – although the other members disputed this, claiming that the guitarist left of his own volition. The following year, Wilko returned with the self-titled debut of his new group *Solid Senders*. It would be their only release, after which he'd start to focus more on his own

Fender
TELECASTER



group, The Wilko Johnson Band, with whom he'd release the majority of his life's work.

"My guitar playing is very simple," he once humbly revealed. "It can be explained in five minutes, and it's served me all this time. I can play three chords, and 12 bars, and back that whole thing up with a bit of machine gun. And that's it. It's simple. But it works. If you put on a determined expression and play loud, people are convinced. I don't rehearse. I don't practise at home. The only time I pick my guitar up is when I walk onstage. So that's how technical I am. I don't think people come to see me to hear any marvellous musical innovations."

Other key releases from his career include contributions to Mick Farren's 1978 album *Vampire Stole My Lunch Money* and two guest spots on Johnny Thunders' 1985 album *Que Sera Sera*. Wilko joined Ian Dury & The Blockheads for their 1980 album *Laughter*, having originally considered retiring from the industry before being convinced by Dury to replace Chaz Jankel. Wilko joined Robert Fripp, Peter Hammill and Robert Smith as a guest star for *The Stranglers And Friends: Live In Concert*, released in 1995 some 15 years after the event took place.

EARLY DAYS
The artist as a young man, and the classic Dr. Feelgood line-up (from left) Wilko, John Martin aka 'The Big Figure', Lee Brilleaux, John B Sparks.

In January 2013, Wilko was diagnosed with late stage pancreatic cancer and chose not to receive any chemotherapy. He had been given nine or ten months to live – during which time he embarked on a farewell tour of the UK and even managed to partner up with The Who's singer Roger Daltrey for the album *Going Back Home*, which reached number three on the UK album charts.

Wilko revealed at the time that he believed *Going Back Home* would be "the last thing [he] ever did". However, the original diagnosis was incorrect and Wilko had actually been suffering from a less aggressive and more treatable form of the disease. After undergoing an 11-hour operation removing parts of his pancreas, spleen and intestines, he announced he was cancer-free and getting used to life knowing that death was "not imminent". He would live almost a decade longer than the doctors had initially given him. And although he's no longer with us now, there can be no doubt that his music and guitar sound will echo for an eternity.

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The Best of 2022

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Illustration Magic Torch

Photos Getty

Interview Jenna Scaramanga

The Year in Guitar

The return of the mega-gig. The rise of the guitar synth. Amazing new music, surprise comebacks and mind-boggling new gear. The story of 2022 has all this and more...

If 2021's silver lining was the barrage of new albums from artists with nothing to do except record, 2022 was the year all those acts hit the stage. We all knew it would be a gig bonanza, but ticket demand exceeded expectations. It's also been a year of unexpected successes. Snarky Puppy, a 25-piece funk/jazz/rock combo, headlined Wembley Arena. The industry didn't know what to do with Nova Twins, but they've been breaking out on the independent Marshall Records anyway. Tash Sultana's 'unplugged' MTV gig, featuring Strats, shouldn't have worked but somehow became a streaming phenomenon. And two octogenarians, Paul McCartney and Buddy Guy, turned in standout performances when some assumed they were past it.

We also saw the results of our massive Greatest Guitar Album poll, with readers choosing their favourite from each decade since the 1960s. We would never call you a predictable bunch, but it's unlikely anyone spat out their coffee on learning you'd voted for Hendrix, Zeppelin, Van Halen, and Metallica. The 2000s and 2010s polls were harder to call, but Alter Bridge and Greta Van Fleet took the tape respectively.

CRAZY CRAZY NIGHTS
YouTube shredder Sophie Lloyd on stage with Machine Gun Kelly

The Newbies

Late last year we tipped Wet Leg for big things, and in 2022 they duly landed a number one album and a Grammy nomination for Best New Artist. Having discovered these psychic abilities, we're still deciding who to back next. The 'Leg, along with TG faves Sam Fender and Nova Twins, were nominated for the Mercury Prize. Italian glam-rockers Måneskin also picked up a Best New Artist nomination, along with genius bluegrass picker Molly Tuttle. Other guitar-toting breakouts included Willow, the daughter of Will Smith and Jada Pinkett, who rocked her black Music Man St. Vincent at festival slots around the world, and Instagram shredder Sophie Lloyd, who got snapped up to play on a world tour with punk-rapper Machine Gun Kelly.

The Tone Trends

After years on the margins, guitar synths hit the big time in 2022, although everyone went about it differently. In disappointing news for high-tech manufacturers, however, none of the players we spoke to was using an actual MIDI pickup. Instead, they'd all found their own ways to get synthy with it.

Idles were first out of the gate with their custom built 'Crawler Machine' that turned Mark Bowen's guitar into an analogue synth with help from multiple loopers and MoogerFooger pedals. For Snarky Puppy's Chris McQueen, the Alexander Syntax Error and ZVex Fuzz Factory got him in the ballpark, and Wingman knobs allowed him to tweak settings with his feet while playing. Bloc Party's Russell Lissack embraced the EHX Synth 9 and Superego Synth Engine along with a wall of delays to create his sounds, while Nova Twins won't reveal how they made theirs. All agreed it's a lot more difficult than just playing the guitar normally. "I'm doing as much with my feet as I'm doing with my hands," admitted Lissack, and Nova Twins' Georgia South agreed "It's more like driving a car!" Maybe they should've tried a MIDI pickup after all.

But there's still plenty of new music to come from plugging an electric guitar straight into a simple amplifier – or straight into the desk if you're Cory Wong. Slash extolled the joys of recording while standing in front of a Mashall Jubilee half stack, and Buddy Guy continued to plug directly into his Fender Bassman. Surprisingly, though it was Black Midi's Geordie Greep who became the unlikely standard-bearer for the cranked Marshall after binning his effects. "Forget the pedals," he told TG. "Let's just turn the amp up to 10!" That such cutting edge music came from such a basic setup shows the power of guitars combined with human creativity. The UK post-punk scene that Black Midi spearheaded continued in rude health too, with their friends Black Country, New Road and Fontaines D.C. spitting out albums hailed as among the year's best.

Cutting edge music is enjoying a purple patch, then, and the roots scene is no less healthy. Larkin Poe told us how they'd dug into blues roots for *Blood Harmony*. Molly Tuttle made a thoroughly modern bluegrass album in *Crooked Tree*, and Big Thief dropped a set that branched out from its folk-rock core in all directions.

STARS OF THE SHOW
Clockwise from top: Idles' Mark Bowen, Moog Moogerfooger, Electro-Harmonix Synth9, Black Midi's Geordie Greep

Photos Getty

TRICK OR TREAT? Slipknot's Mick Thomson (left) and Jim Root returned this year with *The End, So Far*

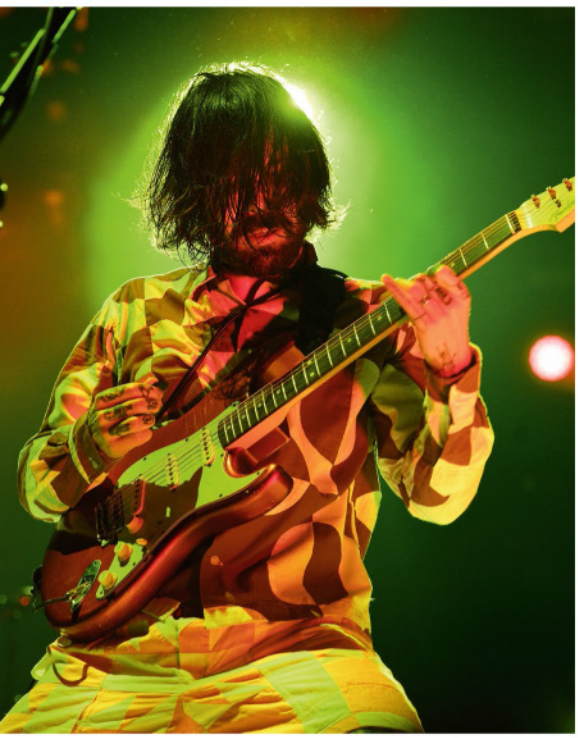
The Comebacks

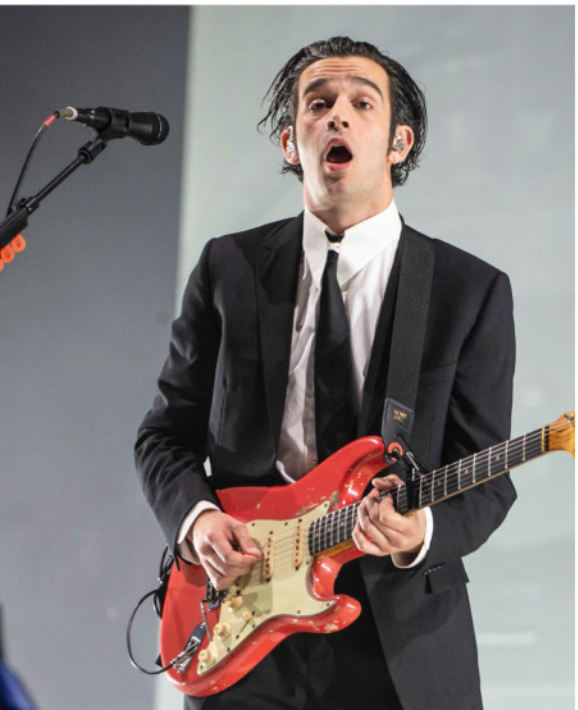
It was a good year for owners of Old Guys Rule t-shirts, with the returns of Slash, Zakk Wylde (with and without Ozzy Osbourne) and Def Leppard. While the promised new Guns N' Roses album is still forthcoming, Slash was giddy about finally recording live in the studio with Myles Kennedy and The Conspirators. Other returning legends included Johnny Marr, whose new album features some JC-120 sounds that hark back to the earliest days of The Smiths. "It's my sound, I can use it as many times as I like!" he told us defiantly.

While the 80s gods took victory laps around stadiums, the 90s kids were right behind them. Korn's *Requiem* was their best since baggy jeans were last in fashion, while Slipknot gave us their most eclectic effort ever with *The End, So Far*. The returning John Frusciante inspired the Red Hot Chili Peppers to release two new albums within six months of each other, like the glory days of 60s rock. And while they gave us no new music, Pearl Jam's Hyde Park gig proved Gen X has lost none of its appetite for standing around moodily outdoors.

Jack White and Matt Bellamy are arguably the last two people to make it as international guitar heroes, and they both released return to form records with the hardest riffing either has done in years. Jack White's Third Man empire showed he's just as committed to giving us new tones as finding them for himself, and Matt Bellamy performed a blistering harmonic minor turn that had shredders making Malmsteen comparisons. Clearly both are still at the forefront of modern guitar.

With so many returning legends – including blues master Buddy Guy, as raucous as ever at 86-year-old – you'd think comeback of the year would be a hotly contested prize. But once Pink Floyd confirmed they'd be dropping a new song, the game was over. Ukrainian musicians Andriy Khlyvnyuk and Stepan Charnetskii's contribution took centre stage as Floyd expressed solidarity with Ukraine. With almost half its running time devoted to a Gilmour solo, Pink Floyd's last notes saw his Telecaster as impassioned as it's ever been.





BRING THE NOISE
Bring Me The Horizon headlined this year's Reading and Leeds festivals

The Mega-Gigs

After two years of cancelled shows, we all knew 2022 would deliver a live bonanza. Demand was phenomenal: Queen and Adam Lambert did ten nights in London alone, and a giant indie-rock jaunt headlined by The Killers and featuring Blossoms, Sam Fender and Manic Street Preachers packed out 13 stadium dates. Former emo kids were spoiled for choice: the Hella Mega Tour was a pop-punk dream ticket with Green Day, Fall Out Boy and Weezer, while My Chemical Romance's three back-to-back nights at Milton Keynes Stadium caused eyeliner shortages around the southeast. The reformed Guns N' Roses treated fans to a dose of nostalgia by starting an hour late at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium. Those who feared the bad old days were returning were soon appeased by Slash's undimmed brilliance.

At Reading, headliners Bring Me The Horizon brought out surprise guest Ed Sheeran for *Bad Habits*, Sheeran rocking a PRS Hollowbody for the occasion. An injury to singer Zach de la Rocha saw Rage Against the Machine replaced by The 1975, whose powerful performance won over all but the grumpiest Rage diehards. Wolf Alice and Sam Fender kept Glastonbury's Pyramid Stage amped up before headliner Paul McCartney, who surprised us by playing his 'Crowd Goes Wild' Les Paul. Dave Grohl, complete with Danelectro, joined him for *I Saw Her Standing There* and *Band On The Run*, while Bruce Springsteen's iconic Telecaster (and the Boss himself) arrived immediately afterwards.

Download is always a guitar-ganza, and with Iron Maiden and Kiss headline sets, we knew we'd get our RDA of hammer-ons and pull-offs. Megadeth's Dave Mustaine and Kiko Loureiro kept the shred fans happy, and having proved themselves worthy headliners in 2017, Biffy Clyro closed things out with Simon Neil's Strat sounding utterly mammoth.

The Foo Fighters' epic Taylor Hawkins tribute shows at Wembley Stadium and the LA Forum saw the biggest assemblage of rock talent since Queen's Freddie Mercury Tribute 30 years before. For guitarists, the headline news was Wolfgang Van Halen, who tore through versions of VH classics *Panama*, *On Fire*, and *Hot For Teacher* with spectacular authenticity. Joe Satriani immediately counted himself out of any possible future Van Halen tributes, saying only Wolfie was qualified for the job. Elsewhere, Nile Rodgers blasted through tracks he produced for David Bowie, and Rush performed for possibly the last time, with Dave Grohl, Chad Smith and Tool's Danny Carey taking turns behind the kit. Queen's Brian May and Roger Taylor blasted through hits with assorted Foos and guests, and Soundgarden performed with Taylor Momsen fronting. By the end of the night, then, the shows had been a tribute not just to Taylor Hawkins, but to Eddie Van Halen, David Bowie, Freddie Mercury, Neil Peart, Chris Cornell, and all of the fallen among rock's greats.

Photos Getty

The Gear

The US NAMM show has always been the place for gear launches, and after an enforced break in 2021 it was back. Animals As Leaders guitarist Tosin Abasi is already known as one of the most innovative players of his generation, but at NAMM he cemented his claim to be one of our most interesting designers too. First his own brand, Abasi Concepts, debuted new double cut and single coil variants of its highly ergonomic extended range guitars. Then he surprised everyone by collaborating with Ernie Ball Music Man to design the radical Kaizen, a multiscale seven string with a radical new shape, heat-treated pickups and a tremolo.

Pedal amps have been big news the last few years, with manufacturers like Orange and Victory cramming full scale heads into a pedal format in a bid to challenge the dominance of digital modellers. Perhaps the logical conclusion of that war is the analogue modelling pedal amp, and Two Notes and BluGuitar lead the way. Two Notes' ReVolt offers three amp sounds, a 12AX7 valve and all-analogue signal path, and the brand's famed cab sims. The BluGuitar Amp X, meanwhile, is a programmable all-analogue affair which claims to recreate any amp sound with valve feel thanks to its 'nano-tube' power section.

POCKET ROCKET
The Positive Grid Spark Mini – the most convenient amp imaginable

Elsewhere, Steve Vai's triple-necked Hydra guitar was a showstopper even without the man himself there to play it. After flirting with Gibson last year, Kirk Hammett announced a new ESP signature V-shaped axe. Tom Quayle's signature Ibanez AZS reflected a hot trend by being one of several T-style guitars to rock a tremolo, and if you've ever been denied taking your guitar on a flight, you might enjoy Ciari's nuts Ascender, which literally folds in half.

On the review bench, PRS's SE guitars continued to offer the best blend of value for money and quality we've seen, and Cort's G290 FAT still seems like they left a '1' off the start of the price. The Manson Meta MBM-2 is a Matt Bellamy signature with quality and tone to go way beyond its core audience, and we're happy to see the P90 neck pickup, always an underrated option. For jamming at home, the Positive Grid Spark Mini is about the most convenient amp imaginable, and for gigging, Blackstar's St James series have the attractive combination of light weight and tonal heft.

The Year Ahead...

Could nylon strings be the stars of 2023? Tosin Abasi and Polyphia's Tim Henson both dropped jaws with prototype nylon signature models, and the way forward often involves looking back.

In gig land, Def Leppard and Mötley Crüe announced a raid on the UK's stadiums, a move made more interesting for guitarists when the Crüe announced John 5 as their new touring guitarist in place of founding member Mick Mars. With Iron Maiden and joint Ozzy/Judas Priest co-headlining jaunts also confirmed, it'll be another big year for fans of loud things from the 80s. Fans of the cutting edge, meanwhile, will be able to see Nova Twins, Polyphia, Black Midi, King Gizzard and more.

There's plenty of music to come, too: Samantha Fish will release a collaboration album with country outlaw Jesse Dayton, Wolf Van Halen's Mammoth WVH will release album #2, and Sam Fender will drop an LP next summer. There are also rumours of new music from Greta Van Fleet, Idles, Bring Me the Horizon and Ben Howard.

Every year, the guitar keeps surprising us as musicians discover new sounds and manufacturers find innovations we didn't know we wanted. The current scene couldn't be healthier, with blindingly original young acts breaking through while the giants of guitar remain at the top of their game. The world is not without its struggles, but whether you want to express your frustrations or escape from them entirely, the guitar is the instrument to do it.

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GUITARIST OF THE YEAR

Interview Richard Bienstock

John Frusciante

2022 saw the release of two monumental albums by the **Red Hot Chili Peppers**, in which John Frusciante demonstrated once again why he is one of the most powerful, intuitive and soulful guitar players on the planet. What's more, he also dug deep to create a song in homage to Eddie Van Halen – a heartfelt tribute from one great player to another, with an extraordinary one-take solo that underscores why TG names him Guitarist Of The Year.

Now, in a wide-ranging interview, John discusses his creative process in depth: how he finds more punch in clean tones; how an appreciation of space serves the band dynamic; how an understanding of theory allows for pure emotional expression; and how the spontaneity in EVH's playing continues to inspire him...

Photo Jonathan Weiner

He plays in one of the biggest and loudest rock bands in the world, but when John Frusciante talks about what he strives for most as a guitarist, the key word is 'vulnerability'.

"I think a lot of the time people want to sound confident on their instrument," he says. "But to me, vulnerability is one of the most endearing things to hear in a piece of music. And I realized it felt like I was giving more of myself if I was vulnerable on the instrument. That ties into using clean tones, doing things that are understated, all these things. And I think that's universal. As much as we admire confidence in people, we all know deep down that vulnerability is one of the hardest things to achieve. And any little degree that you can allow yourself to be more vulnerable, with your friends or with your partner or with your playing, it's one of the strongest things you can do."

2022 has been a landmark year for the Red Hot Chili Peppers. With Frusciante alongside singer Anthony Kiedis, bassist Flea and drummer Chad Smith in the classic line-up that made defining albums such as *Blood Sugar Sex Magik* (1991) and *Californication* (1999), the band delivered not one but two new albums this year – and double albums at that. *Unlimited Love* and *Return Of The Dream Canteen* were recorded with producer Rick Rubin at his Shangri-La Studios in Malibu, California. And across the two albums and 34 tracks, Frusciante, now aged 52, demonstrates the same beautifully idiosyncratic playing style that made him an alt-rock guitar hero at the tender age of 21: the elastic, slinky rhythm work; the alternately fluid and furious chording; the feedback-drenched, acid-fuzz solo freak-outs; the inspired improvisations; and the almost telepathic instrumental interactions with Flea and Smith.

In a lengthy conversation, John explains his approach to these two albums, how his style has developed within the band, and how he had to free his mind to put his heart and soul into a song for his hero Eddie Van Halen...

Unlimited Love and _Return Of The Dream Canteen_ were recorded in the same sessions. When you were in the studio, did you have an idea of which songs would ultimately wind up on which record?

I definitely gave it a lot of thought, but it really came down to what order we decided to mix the songs in. I had my own personal idea of what would make a good second album and what would make a good first one, but I didn't feel so strongly about it that I took the trouble to go to the band and say, 'Look, guys, before we mix anything, let's make this decision right here and now.' I planned on doing that, but I just never did. It seemed like the way it went was sometimes Anthony would suggest mixing a particular song, sometimes I would, sometimes maybe Flea would. And we just kind of trusted that whatever was going to be was going to be. There really was no conscious idea about what the difference between the two albums should be. That said, there were certain songs that I felt should wait for the second album, like *Eddie*. I really wanted to put that one on the second one because I felt like it might be kind of a crowd pleaser. And we didn't want the first album to be all the best stuff and the second one to be the leftovers. So there were certain songs that, even though people wanted to mix them, I argued that, 'Let's save that one.'

Looking back on these two albums, do you notice certain defining characteristics of each one?

Dream Canteen has a more colourful, kind of *bright* thing to it. Not that it doesn't have dark sections, for sure. But to me, *Unlimited Love* somehow seems darker. *Dream Canteen* also maybe has more surprising elements. There's a little bit of that on the first album, too, but especially on the second half of this one, there's probably more synthesizers and drum machines and stuff like that than people might expect from us. And it also feels more off the cuff and spontaneous. There's a certain feeling of relaxedness and looseness that distinguishes *Return Of The Dream Canteen* from *Unlimited Love*.

RIGHT
John Frusciante performing with the Red Hot Chili Peppers at Comerica Park in Detroit on August 14, 2022.

You mentioned the song *Eddie*, which is clearly a tribute to Eddie Van Halen, especially in regard to Anthony's lyrics. While the music doesn't much reflect the Van Halen sound, you clearly incorporated some overt EVH flourishes into your solo – tapping, whammy bar work, unique phrasings. What was your intention going into that one?

When we're in the studio and between takes, I'm always doing things like two-handed tapping. The engineers hear it all the time; I'll play really flashy stuff during breaks. But when it comes to recording, I'm doing what I think is right for the song, and in most cases that doesn't involve playing really flashy. But it is something I enjoy. Still, doing that solo was a mind-f*ck, I'll tell you that. And it was the last solo that I did out of all the solos on the 48 songs we recorded. I saved it for last, because the idea of having a song about Eddie Van Halen, you're basically saying to people, 'Think about Eddie Van Halen.' And then when it comes to this long guitar solo at the end, you're going, 'Now watch this!' And I did not like that idea. I was even thinking of cutting the solo entirely, because I did not know how to go about it. I was trying for a while, and I wasn't happy with anything I was doing. I was either going too far in the Eddie Van Halen direction, to where it was too busy and there was too much two-handed tapping and it didn't sound like me, or I was just doing it and it only sounded like me... in a song about Eddie Van Halen.

How did you find a happy medium?

I just turned my mind off and stopped thinking about it. I stopped being self-conscious about the idea that the song was about Eddie Van Halen and just did what was natural. We were recording, and I took maybe a 15-minute break. And when I came back in, I just did the whole thing, like I said, in one take. Whatever Eddie Van Halen is in there, it's just there because of my love for him and the love that I've felt for his playing

"EDDIE VAN HALEN WAS GOING OUT ON A LIMB AND TAKING RISKS. I'VE TRIED TO DO A LOT OF THAT"

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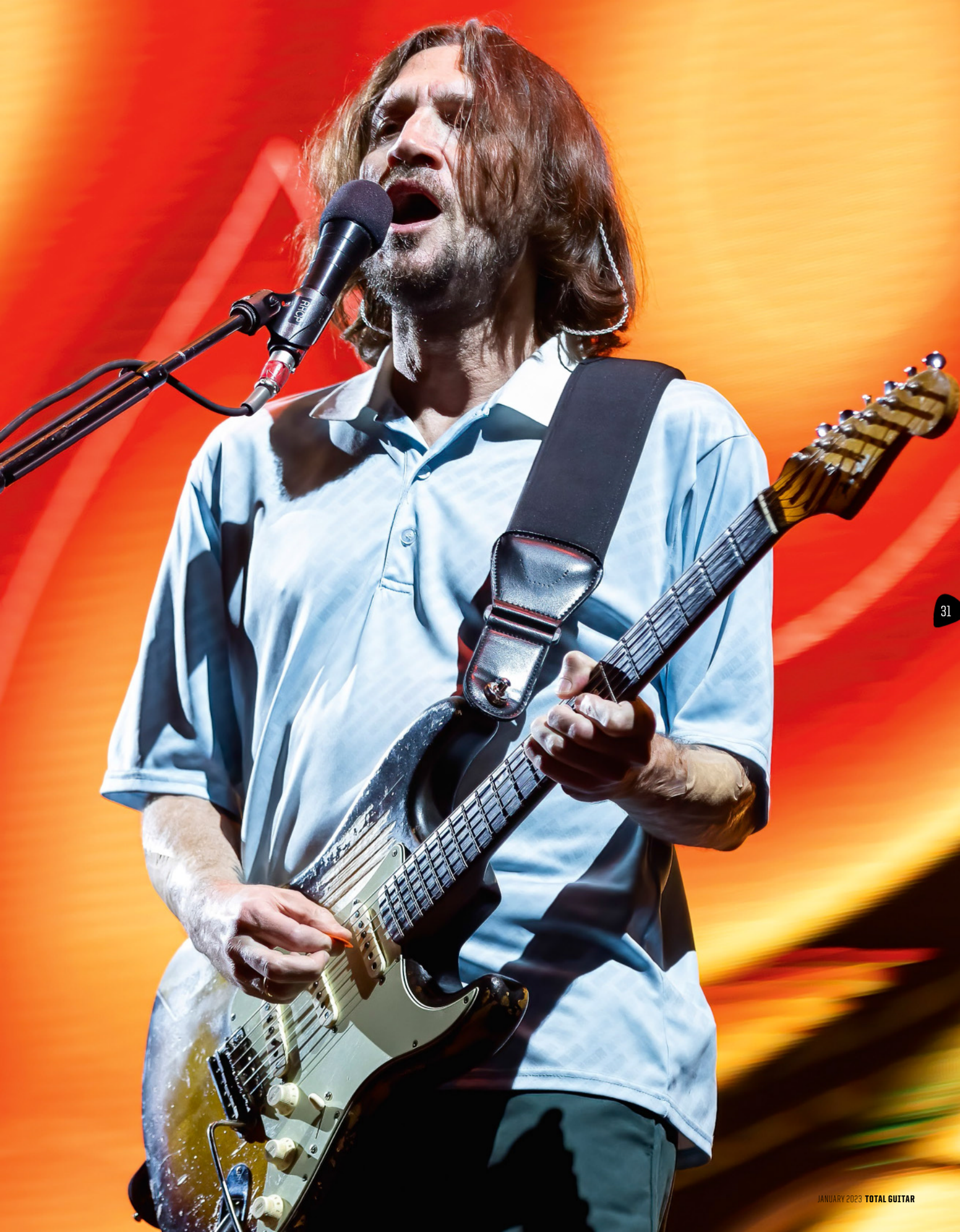


since I was eight years old – things like the fast tapping, and accentuating different notes with the vibrato bar. He did that a lot. And then there are also the parts of his style that don't involve playing fast, that are just really exciting to me – playing in a way that feel spontaneous, or when you hear feedback because you know he recorded his parts while he was in the same room as his amplifier. To this day, those things give me chills. Like, this is real, what's happening here. This isn't some guy standing in the control room punching in. This is a guy going out on a limb and taking risks. Throughout both of these albums, I tried to do a lot of that.

As far as the hallmarks of your style, one thing that has always stuck out is your use of space. You hear it on songs like *Eddie* and *Shoot Me A Smile* on *Dream Canteen*, and also in classic tracks like *Scar Tissue* and *Californication*. Another obvious one would be *Otherside* from the *Californication* album, where, for much of the rhythm track, you're playing maybe two or three notes. Where does that approach come from?

It really comes from trying to figure out what I can do that makes Flea and Chad sound as good as they can. Back in the time of *Mother's Milk* [John's first album with the band, released in 1989], I was trying to fill up more space and it just sounded too busy. It wasn't as busy as Flea, but Flea has a way of being busy on the bass that never sounds too busy. It always sounds like he's doing what he's doing in support of the song. I felt after making that record that I wasn't supporting the songs and my band mates as well as I could have.

That began to change on the follow-up, *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*.

Another thing there was that Rick Rubin, when he started producing us at the *Blood Sugar* time, he kept adding ideas to the arrangements. Like, 'Have no guitar for the first verse', or, 'Have no bass for the second verse.' He came from this hip-hop experience, so he was essentially muting the instruments in certain sections. That was inspiring for me, because I was already going in the direction of playing less and seeing how much better that made the band sound as a whole. So I just got to a point where I really saw the musical value of space of

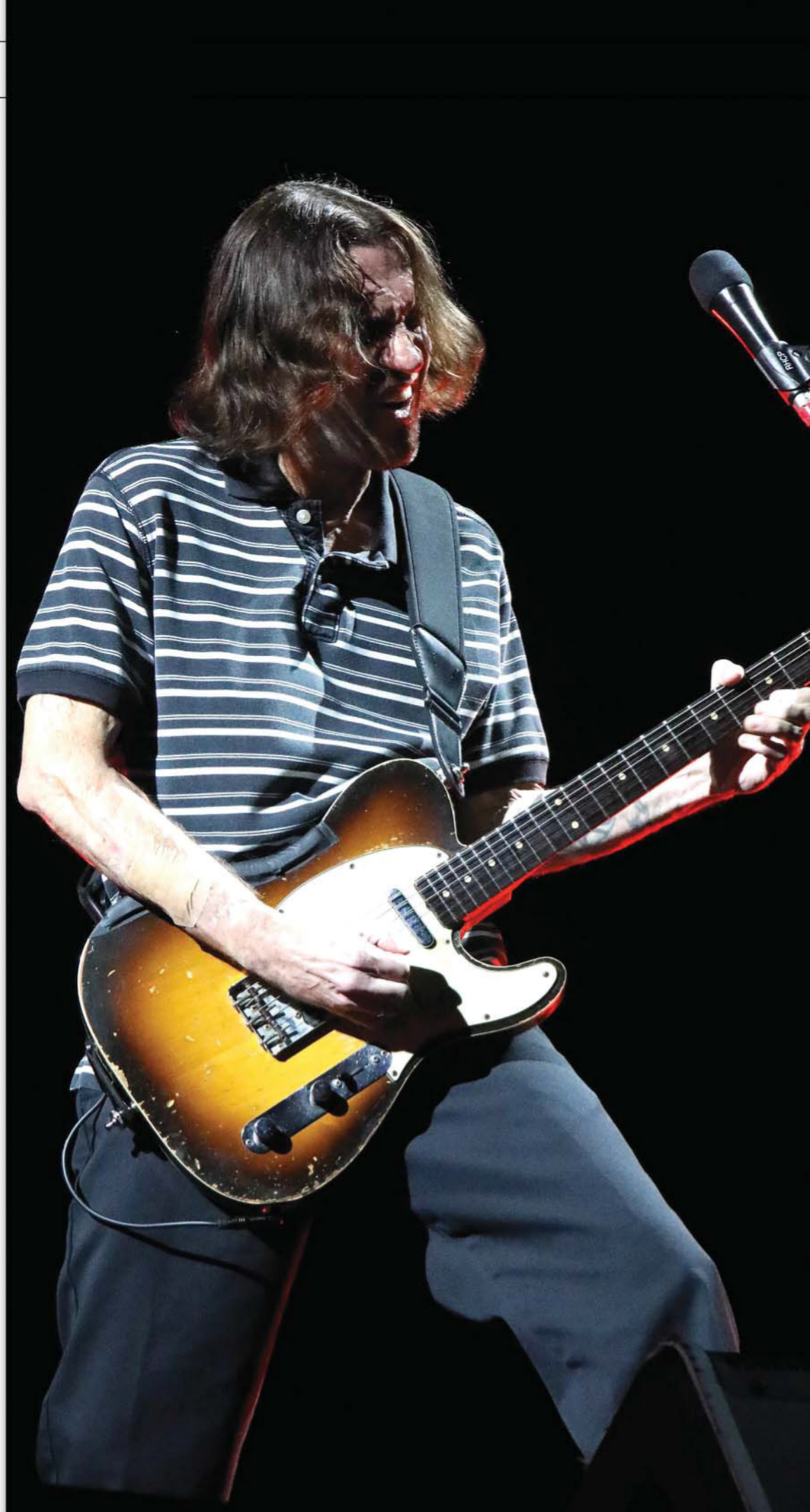


Photo Getty

all types, whether it's the distance between one point in the bar line and another point in the bar line, or the distance between two sounds, in terms of using wide intervals or creating a chord out of me playing one note on my guitar and Flea playing one note on his bass. It just seemed to make the band feel more whole. And to be honest, the other guys really liked it when I started playing that way, and I felt supported.

You also employ intervals, and particularly wide intervals, in a very unique way.

I think a lot of people play guitar a certain way, and it may be because they're just playing with bass players who play simple root-note bass lines. But because Flea plays in such an interesting way, I think of intervals not only as the relationship between two notes on my instrument but as the relationship between what I'm doing and what he's doing. Take something like the intro to *By The Way* or the verses of *Otherside* – I'm not thinking of my guitar as the centre of it; I'm thinking of my guitar as a portion of it. I'm thinking of the pitch of Flea's bass line and the pitch of my guitar. If Flea's playing a note and I'm playing a note, we've got a two-note chord right there. And the interval is the space between that. So then it's like, 'How can I move in a way that's different from how he's moving?' If he goes down, maybe I go up, you know? And we start creating different little harmony things where we imply chords without either of us playing the whole chord, that kind of thing. Or there's things like *Scar Tissue*, where I'm doing those wide, two-note intervals on my own, but I'm really thinking of it as two separate parts.

Sonically, your use of space is complemented by the fact that you're incredibly comfortable incorporating fully clean tones into your rhythm and lead work.

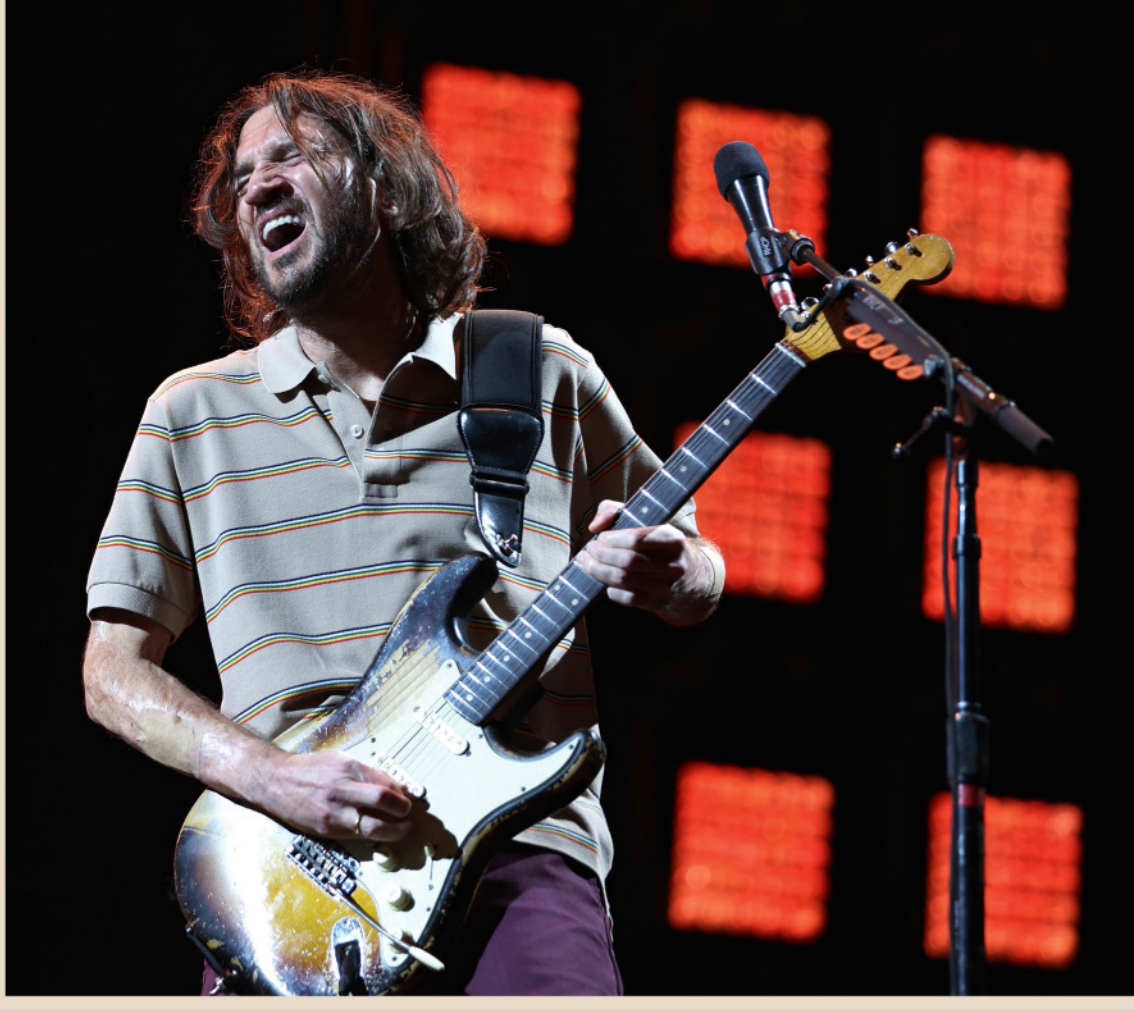
For me, it's really about being punchy. That's more important than distortion. Distorted guitar often sounds pretty wimpy to me. Even if the person's got a rich, thick tone, if the way they're hitting the instrument isn't exciting and punchy, it doesn't do anything for me.

TEAM PLAYERS
From left: Flea, John Frusciante, Chad Smith, Anthony Kiedis.

What inspired your attraction to clean tones?

A lot of the basis for my guitar playing, stylistically, is in music that I loved when I was a kid that I've always continued to love. There's a lot of post-punk stuff, or what we now call post-punk stuff. Back then we called it new wave. But it's guys like Ricky Wilson from the B-52's and Matthew Ashman from Bow Wow Wow. Bands like The Cure and Scritti Politti and the Minutemen. The Pop Group is a really weird one, but I think they were some real originators, and the guitar playing is really good. All these people and bands did really powerful things with clean tones. You listen to D. Boon's playing in the Minutemen and you really hear what I'm talking about. He'll rip into a solo, and the tone is clean as can be. But it's got more power than a heavy-metal guitar player, just because he cares so much and he's putting so much soul and feeling into the thing. And Ricky Wilson, the first show I ever saw that was in a big place, like a 5,000-seater, was the B-52's. This was in '83. And his guitar playing was just incredible. Like,

"WHEN WE'RE IN THE STUDIO BETWEEN TAKES, I'M ALWAYS DOING THINGS LIKE TWO-HANDED TAPPING"



it made people happy. And I'm really about the emotional response. For me, it's more about reaching people than it is about wanting to say, 'Look at how big and tough and macho I am!'

All that said, you can also conjure some truly thick and gnarly tones when the song calls for it. The chords you're playing in the chorus of *Reach Out*, from *Dream Canteen*, would be a good example. Or, solo-wise, the fuzz-and-feedback frenzy in *The Heavy Wing* on *Unlimited Love*. How did you achieve those sounds?
A lot of times it's from using more than one distortion pedal at a time. I generally have a Boss distortion pedal on – the yellow [OD-3 OverDrive] or the orange [DS-1 Distortion] one — and also an Electro-Harmonix Big Muff or that brown MXR distortion pedal [the Super Badass Variac Fuzz]. It seemed like I used those a lot on the records. I can't remember specifically what pedals I used where, but I'd say a lot of the time I'm combining different distortions and fuzz tones. So it's that, and then it's also having the Marshalls really loud and being in the same room with them. Because even when you're not getting feedback, when you're right there in front of a loud amp, there is a form of feedback going on that contributes to the sense of the sound being kind of super blown-out. I think the fact that almost all the distorted solos were done with me in the same room as the amp contributes to the tone in its own way.

Even with all of this focus on technique and sound and gear, the crux of your guitar playing is in the emotional content. How do you manage to play from your heart, rather than your brain?
God, that's a good question, and a hard one to answer. I feel like all that conflict took place in me between the ages of 14 and 18, and after that I learned the lesson. And luckily my brain was developing while I was learning that lesson. But during those years when I was learning it, I had all kinds of conflicts. But once I got to the point where I felt I could pretty much play whatever I wanted to learn, it was a very exciting period for me. But there was also that question in my mind of, 'What is it that I have to say?' Because I was so in love with all these different people who made vastly different types of music, and guitar players who were also so different from one another. And it seemed to me that each one had their own little place in saying something that was different than what the other one was saying. Even people who were kind of similar, like Randy Rhoads and Eddie Van Halen, to me they were saying completely different things. And so when I was a teenager, I would wonder about those things, like, 'What is it that I have to say that's different from anybody else?'

THE SEEKER
"There was always that question in my mind: 'What is it that I have to say with my guitar playing?'"

How did learning theory play into that?
My understanding of theory was a way for me to be able to analyze the things that I liked. So if I was playing along with, say, the guitar solo in *Something* by the Beatles, and there's certain notes that [George Harrison] plays that make me go, 'Wow, what the hell was he thinking?' 'Why did he go from that note to that note?' 'Why does it feel so good when he does it?' I'm able to look at those notes in relationship to the chords and the intervals and so on and figure it out. So for me, the purpose of knowing the theory is to have an understanding of why I'm feeling a particular emotion.

And you've talked about vulnerability being a strength...
As far as me having those thoughts when I was a kid about, 'What do I have to say to people with my guitar playing?', I feel like a lot of what I've wound up having to say has to do with vulnerability. It has to do with being supportive of other people, and also putting yourself out there in a way that's scary sometimes. It's that thing where it feels like your heart's too much out there and people could stomp on it, but also that you're okay with that, you know?

"FOR ME, THE PURPOSE OF KNOWING THEORY IS TO UNDERSTAND OF WHY I'M FEELING AN EMOTION"

Photo Getty

THREE'S A PARTY

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Words Stan Bull, Ellie Rogers, Amit Sharma, Jenna Scaramanga

The Albums of the Year

So many great albums have been released this year, including two from Jack White, two from the Red Hot Chili Peppers and five from the relentlessly brilliant King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard. In TG's top 20 there's everything from indie-folk to instrumental tech-metal...

20
Chat Pile
GOD'S COUNTRY
(Flenser)

2022 has been quite the year for Oklahoma's Chat Pile, who were virtually unknown until the release of debut LP *God's Country* in July. But thanks to said album's nine slices of brilliant sludge rock, they have become one of the most hyped underground bands in the world. It's easy to hear why. Tracks like *Slaughterhouse* and *Why* are so relentlessly pummelling yet groovy that Chat Pile pull off the near-impossible – abrasive dissonance that nevertheless gets stuck in your head.

19
Yard Act
THE OVERLOAD
(Island)

Arriving fully-formed with this debut album, Yard Act sounded less like a band discovering their sound than one who have already perfected their hyper-specific brand of spiky, danceable post-punk. Though the heavily politicised (and often hilarious) lyrics of vocalist James Smith are often the main talking point, guitarist Sam Shjipstone colours the surreal songs of *The Overload* with all manner of angular staccato riffs. A crowning moment for the UK's breakthrough stars of the year.

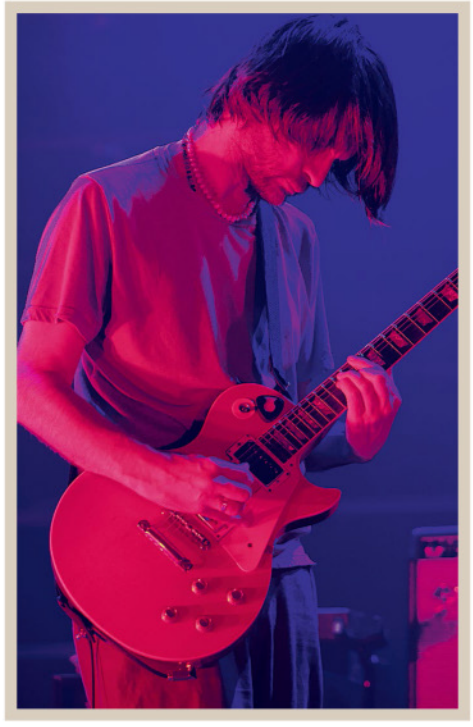
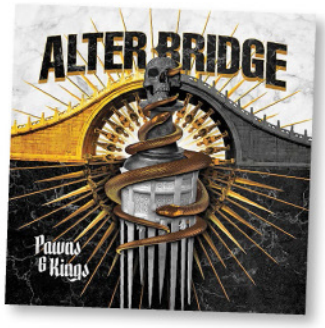


Photo Getty

18
The Smile
A LIGHT FOR ATTRACTING ATTENTION
(XL)

In the last few years, Thom Yorke and Johnny Greenwood have delivered stellar solo music, but *A Light For Attracting Attention*, the debut album from the pair's side project The Smile, is their first collaboration since Radiohead's 2016 LP *A Moon Shaped Pool*. And there is much for Greenwood enthusiasts to savour – with tracks such as *The Opposite* and *Thin Thing* featuring some of his most intricate guitar work since 2003's *Hail To The Thief*.

PICTURE DISCS
From left: Chat Pile's *God's Country*, Yard Act's *The Overload* and The Smile's *A Light For Attracting Attention*



17
Alter Bridge
PAWNS & KINGS
(Napalm)

Alter Bridge's seventh album saw Mark Tremonti and Myles Kennedy get heavier, riffier and harder to predict than ever before. The two guitarists, who'd both used recent solo projects to explore different sides of their musical personalities, smashed up their long-established roles on *Pawns & Kings*, with Kennedy authoring many of the record's heaviest riffs – like *Silver Tongue* and *This Is War* – and laying down a torrent of fret-scorching solos. Tremonti, on the other hand, turned his attention more towards songwriting than the aggressive speed metal stylings that had first propelled him to guitar god status, and switched into frontman mode for the ballad *Stay*. Both relied as heavily as ever upon PRS guitars for recording, and Tremonti's collection of Dumble, Cornford and signature PRS amps took care of much of the tonal heavy lifting.

16
Larkin Poe
BLOOD HARMONY
(Tricki-Woo)

Rebecca and Megan Lovell's roots rock 'n' roll stands out because they're so clearly steeped in the genres they play. Their previous incarnation, The Lovell Sisters, played the Grand Ole Opry, and their deep cut cover choices show they didn't just buy a Stevie Ray album and think they knew blues. It's obvious why Billy Gibbons, Steven Tyler, and Elvis Costello have all picked the Lovells as backing musicians. By now, those rock and Americana influences have emerged as their own sound. Their blues-rock blend is timeless. It could be from any era and sounds completely fresh. *Bad Spell* might be the year's dirtiest riff, and Megan's lap steel adds a layer of old school cool to every track. The sisters told us that recording at home let them play and experiment with their music more. That sense of great musicians doing what they love pervades every track.

15 Animals As Leaders

PARRHESIA

(Sumerian Records)

Great things are always to be expected from Animals As Leaders, and the masters of instrumental tech-metal delivered in full with their fifth album, produced by Periphery trailblazer Misha Mansoor. Over nine tracks spanning just over 36 minutes, guitarists Tosin Abasi and Javier Reyes are on tremendous form – using an array of techniques to conjure unearthly noises that dazzle and excite in ways only they can.

Anyone who caught Abasi's play-through of lead single *Monomyth* on his YouTube channel, for example, will have seen how effortlessly he blends thumping, sliding taps, fingerstyle and sweeps into one mind-melting package. Then there's the selective picking – a term Abasi himself coined – used on other tracks, where the virtuoso pair combine picked notes with the plectrum with the staccato slap from 'cold hammer-ons', producing lines which have their own timbre and unique sense of phrasing. As Abasi has pointed out in the past, great care needs to be taken with muting in order for the ideas to come out sounding fully clean and percussive. He has also noted how a split-coil sound with the right amount of compression can yield fantastic results. More importantly, however – as per many of their songs of the past – their creative exploits are more than just a masterclass in technicality, both eight-string guitarists always managing to serve the song, first and foremost. The varying dynamics heard on tracks like *Thoughts And Prayers* and Gestaltzerfall are truly electrifying – Abasi and Reyes knowing exactly when to rein it back and exhibit the kind of restraint it's so easy for us guitar players to forget about. With their biggest headline shows to date booked for the European tour in January, 2023 is guaranteed to another milestone year for this stupendously innovative trio.

INSTRU-METAL
Animals As Leaders' Tosin Abasi

Photos: Jen Rosenstein/Olly Curtis

14
The 1975
BEING FUNNY IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE
(Dirty Hit)

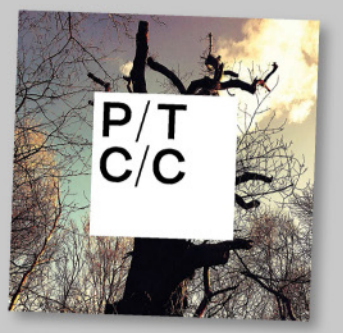
Guitarist Adam Hann told TG how "playing in the moment" informed the writing on The 1975's fifth album, which features their most human-sounding and soulful material yet. Highlights include the folky fingerpicking of *Part Of The Band*, the acoustic solo on funky house number *Happiness* and the nine-guitar-layering outro of *I'm In Love With You*. A looser, more personal album from one of the best indie pop groups working today.

13
Muse
WILL OF THE PEOPLE
(Warner)

When Matt Bellamy name-checked Slipknot, Gojira and Deftones as his metallic influences, it was clear that he had plans to crank the distortion more than ever on Muse's ninth album. *Won't Stand Down* and *Kill Or Be Killed* are among the heaviest offerings we've heard from the band, while *You Make Me Feel Like It's Halloween* came turbo-charged with Bellamy's shreddiest lead to date – an echo of one of his early influences, Yngwie Malmsteen.

12
Meshuggah
IMMUTABLE
(Atomic Fire)

There's simply no such thing as a bad Meshuggah album. Even after all this time, the Swedish tech-metal pioneers still finding new ways to make us scratch our heads over the time count they're playing in. During a break from touring, founding member Fredrik Thordendal hadn't picked up a guitar in three years, but his head-twisting atmospheric leads on tracks such as *The Abysmal Eye* and *The Faultless* proved he'd lost none of his ethereal mojo.



11
Porcupine Tree
CLOSURE/CONTINUATION
(Music For Nations)

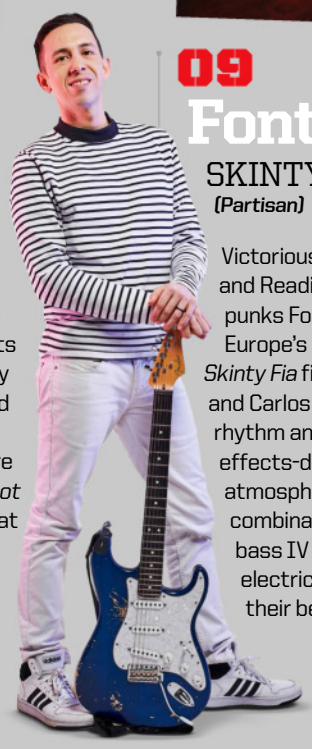
The return of the English progressive rock heavyweights was one of the biggest surprises of the year, although as singer/guitarist Steven Wilson revealed, they'd actually been covertly penning the new music for over a decade. So was Porcupine Tree's first album since 2009 worth the wait? The answer came in the down-tuned brilliance of lead single *Harridan*, the winding rhythms of *Rats Return* and the hair-raising dynamics of *Herd Culling*.

10
Cory Wong
WONG'S CAFE
(Vulf)

Cory has said he brings "rhythm guitar to the front", and *Wong's Cafe* is a tour de force of the kind of groovy and tasteful guitar parts usually buried in the mix on Quincy Jones albums. Pop guitar lives and dies by this kind of tight, pocket playing, but he's raised it to centre stage with great tunes like *You Got To Be You*. He is to funk guitar what Joe Satriani is to shred.

09
Fontaines D.C.
SKINTY FIA
(Partisan)

Victorious sets at this year's Glastonbury and Reading festivals saw Irish post-punks Fontaines D.C. become one of Europe's most popular guitar bands. *Skinty Fia* finds guitarists Connor Curley and Carlos O'Connell foregoing traditional rhythm and lead playing for all manner of effects-driven counter melodies and atmospheric textures. What's more, the combination of 12-string acoustic, Fender bass IV and reverb-soaked surf-tone electric makes *Jackie Down The Line* their best tune yet.



08

Eric Gales

CROWN

(Provogue/Mascot)

Eric Gales stated his intentions for his 19th album at the tail end of 2021 with the title of its lead single: *I Want My Crown*. When the album dropped in January 2022, he took his rightful position as reigning supremo of modern blues.

Back in the late 80s, Memphis-born Gales was hailed as a child prodigy – much like this album's chief producer, Joe Bonamassa, who also guests on the title track's frenetic dual-guitar showdown. Gales had mastered the tones and techniques of Jimi Hendrix and B.B. King at a mind-bogglingly young age – a feat made all the more spectacular because he did so on a right-handed guitar, flipped and played southpaw style, *à la* Albert King. Unlike Bonamassa, however, Gales' path to the top was waylaid for decades by demons of self-doubt, drug addiction and even a stint in jail. But, if blues music is at its most successful when it transforms personal anguish into universally evocative art, then Crown is all the richer for Gales' indomitable spirit in the face of prolonged adversity. Lyrical themes of overcoming are soundtracked by breathtaking displays of technical ability, and a raw soulfulness that springs from every note.

Gales' instantly recognisable sound is characterised not only by his leftie style, but by the tasteful smatterings of Dorian, Mixolydian and Phrygian modes that spice up his arsenal of pentatonic-based licks. On *Crown*, he draws upon funk, gospel, jazz and rock to reinvigorate his blues, and employs a fine array of signature gear to really make his sound his own. In the guitar department, that meant using his collection of Magneto Sonnet RawDawgs, which take their tonal and design cues from the Fender Stratocaster. When diverging from the sparkly cleans offered by his signature DV Mark amp, Gales dirtied things up with a signature E.W.S. Brute Drive distortion, as well as with his MXR Raw Dawg Overdrive – a pedal based on the classic Ibanez Tube Screamer.

Photo Olly Curtis

REAL PLUGIN

LA-STUDIO

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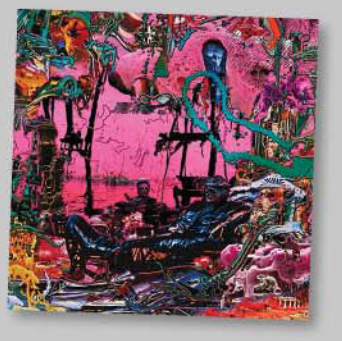

07
Black Midi
HELLFIRE
(Rough Trade)

For Hellfire, Black Midi's singer/guitarist Geordie Greep looked to AC/DC and plugged straight into a cranked Marshall. Anyone who expects a conventional rock album, though, will have their mind expanded by this kaleidoscopic adventure in musical possibility. The joy of Black Midi is sounding like no one's told them about genres: they pick up every sound they find interesting, wherever it comes from. More melodic than 2021's *Cavalcade*, Hellfire is the cutting edge of experimental guitar music.

06
Nova Twins
SUPERNOVA
(Marshall)

They grew up on RnB and learned their trade on the DIY punk scene. They take sonic cues from the filthy synths of N.E.R.D. and Timbaland, and riff like metalheads. There's rap, big hooks and dubstep style breakdowns. There are few bands so unafraid to be themselves, and even fewer just making sounds they love regardless of whether it fits into a genre box. But innovation means nothing without great songs, and Nova Twins have both.

05
Red Hot Chili Peppers
RETURN OF THE DREAM CANTEEN
(Warner)

Following legendary guitarist John Frusciante's return to the group in 2019, *Return Of The Dream Canteen* was the Chilis' second double album of 2022, a clear sign of Frusciante's inspirational role in the band. And if *Unlimited Love* sounded like a band finding their feet again, *Dream Canteen* was a full return to form. From the playful, funky riffing of *Tippa My Tongue* to the epic solo on EVH tribute *Eddie*, the Chilis sound fully revitalised.

04
Big Thief
DRAGON NEW WARM MOUNTAIN I BELIEVE IN YOU
(4AD)

Brooklyn's Big Thief followed the impressive one-two punch of 2019's *U.F.O.F* and *Two Hands* with a double album of masterful indie-folk. The guitar playing of *Dragon* always aims to serve the song, but Adrianne Lenker and Buck Meek nevertheless conjure up numerous ways to colour the album with rich, harmonious playing. Delicate folk picking, twangy country leads, alt-rock scuzz and broken-chord riffs are all present across 20 emotionally-rewarding tracks.

03
King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard
OMNIUM GATHERUM
(KGLW)

Australian psych lords King Gizzard may be the most prolific band in the world right now. *Omnium Gatherum* – their 20th album in 10 years – saw the band moving away from their one-sound-per-album format to cover a range of styles from prog-metal (*Gaia*) to krautrock (*The Dripping Tap*), neo-jazz (*Ambergris*), 90s chillout (*Candles*) and more. So varied and strong are these 16 tracks that *OG* sounds like a Greatest Hits compilation.

Photos: Getty / Paige Sara

02

Jack White

FEAR OF THE DAWN

(Third Man)

With hid hardest-rocking solo album ever, Jack White shows he's got no intention of relinquishing his position at the top of the 21st century guitar hero pile. This year has seen young pretenders making their guitars sound like synths, but on *Taking Me Back*, the opening track on *Fear Of The Dawn*, White shows he's still the boss with a glitchy mix of fuzz, whammy, and stuttering effects, while on the album's title track the shuffle groove and whammy howls come on like Black Sabbath at Halloween. The tones are so jagged you can almost feel them, and that combined with such grinding riffs will have listeners pulling extravagant guitar faces just listening to it.

When The White Stripes emerged, Alice Cooper was so taken with their garage revivalism he made three garage rock records of his own, but on *Into The Twilight*, another standout from *Fear Of The Dawn*, White combines scuzzy riffs with a spooky aesthetic more successfully than Cooper ever has.

White's gift is in making square-edged sounds listenable, so this album, like the Stripes before it, is ugly and infectious at the same time. *That Was Then (This Is Now)* has a British Invasion poppiness that handbrake-turns into funky half-time sections. *Eosophobia* gets a reprise with a spectacular guitar intro that reminds us of some of EVH and Nuno Bettencourt's adventures with delay pedals.

The closing track *Shedding My Velvet* opens with pure blues licks on a near-clean guitar over an atmospheric vibraphone part. Without the fuzz and whammy theatrics, White is just a damn tasty blueser. We weren't sure if he would riff this hard again, so it's thrilling that on *Fear Of The Dawn* the guitars are so loud and the delivery is so exciting.

CHART TOPPER
TG's Album of the Year, the cheerily-titled *Remember You Will Die*

Photo: Kevin Scanlon

01 Polyphia

REMEMBER THAT YOU WILL DIE

(Rise)

Taking more of an 'everything but the kitchen sink' approach to their music than ever before, the fourth album from Polyphia is undoubtedly their most sonically expansive and genre-defying release to date. There are moments where Tim Henson and Scott LePage's guitars sit at the back of the mix and aren't even the main focus, allowing trumpets, keyboards or guest vocals from contemporary artists like Sophia Black, Killstation and $not to take the lead. It's a heavily collaborative album in that regard, and one which allowed outside influences to help shape the Texan quartet's creative direction, yielding some truly jaw-dropping results.

Take opening track *Genesis*, for instance, which almost ended up being a song for R&B singer/guitarist H.E.R. As Tim Henson explains: "*Genesis* started off in a session that I had with Rodney Jerkins, who is the guy who made *Say My Name* by Destiny's Child and [music with] Beyoncé and Mariah Carey. Originally it started off as a loop. We were going to send it off to H.E.R. But I ended up using what we'd recorded for Polyphia. We built a song around the vocoder loops. It's definitely one of our most mature-sounding songs. It's got the gospel chord progression and loads of really interesting voicings. I'd say it's definitely one of my favourite songs on this album, especially for playing live because it's easy. I don't have to worry about playing a billion notes per-second! It grooves so hard – it's just a fun song to listen to."

Remember That You Will Die is also notable for Henson and LePage's usage of nylon-string acoustics, adding a flamenco feel and sense of classical flair to songs like *Playing God*, *Chimera* and *Ego Death*. But if you think they've been learning from classic Al Di Meola albums, you'd be mistaken. As it turns out, the Polyphia pair weren't really that aware of the fusion maestro until after the new music had been recorded.

"I actually didn't listen to Al Di Meola until *Playing God* had come out and somebody pointed out the similarities!" Tim laughs. "I listened to it and was like, 'That's not really my bag!' But yeah, if you play the harmonic minor scale on an acoustic, especially a nylon-string, it's going to sound very Spanish. It was Tosin Abasi who told me to learn a classical piece called *La Catedral*, which is very flamenco-sounding and needs a lot of finger dexterity from the right hand. The nylon tends to lend itself to that sound...

"Chimera was actually one of the first songs we wrote for this album. I remember Scott started this idea with all the down-tuned sh*t. He sent me that and I thought, 'This is heavy as f*ck and awesome!' I started writing to it and I'd just gotten my new nylon signature [Ibanez TOD10N]. I ended up coming up with the most Spanish-sounding riff I've ever done and it seemed to transition really well into that heavy, bouncy sh*t. I sent it back to Scott and he was pretty taken aback, because he did not expect a start like that. I think it gives the song a super nice contrast – you think you're getting this Spanish guitar thing and then it goes into Meshuggah-esque, f*ckin' drop-tuned sh*t!"

If there's anything that this album truly exemplifies, however, it's restraint. While the Polyphia guitarists certainly created a long-lasting impression early on with their technical wizardry, their latest opus exhibits a new level of maturity that champions simplicity more than anything else they've recorded.

As Tim says in conclusion: "These days I allot time for only a certain amount of notes, rather than trying to cram a ton of notes into one spot – where it can sound like w*nk with no actual rhythm. I just find the right amount of sixteenth or thirty second notes and fit them into the right arrangement. Nowadays, I think less about technique and prefer to go with what sounds good!"

Words Ellie Rogers

The Songs of the Year

Wet Leg created a breakout hit out of one chord. But there was nothing minimalist about King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard's 18-minute psychedelic freakout with its cacophonous triple-guitar throwdown...

01 King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard

THE DRIPPING TAP

The Dripping Tap – the opening track and lead single from *Omnium Gatherum*, King Gizzard's 20th studio album – is packed with interlocking riffs, hooks and harmonies, multiple dynamic peaks, troughs and crescendos, and more fiery fretwork than many artists can muster across an entire album. How can a band possibly cover so much ground in one song? Well, *The Dripping Tap* runs to a truly epic 18 minutes and 17 seconds. For those who like to listen to their music on large flat plastic discs, that's the whole of side one of *Omnium Gatherum*.

As King Gizzard's frontman Stu Mackenzie said: "We decided, this is like our classic sprawling 'double album – our White Album – where anything goes." And true enough, *The Dripping Tap* is in no way a conventionally structured song. The extended and largely instrumental psychedelic jam-fest begins in meandering lo-fi blues territory, reminiscent of the band's *12 Bar Bruise* debut, before a gong-like chord strike around the one minute mark signals the first of many gear shifts. From there on out, motoring riffage ensues, leading to peak levels Gizz giddiness in the form of a cacophonous hammer-on and pull-off-stuffed triple guitar throwdown that sounds not unlike an arcade full of 80s space shooter games all having their buttons bashed to bits at once. Dazzling harmonies light up the halfway mark and resurface once more just after the hypnotic repetitions of the "Drip, drip from the tap don't slip" refrain, and just before a frenzied finishing freakout.

Reflecting, truly for the first time on record, the band's proclivity towards elongated on-stage improvisations, *The Dripping Tap* marked some of the first music they were able to make in a room together after Covid-19 restrictions were lifted. Sounding as if they'd set the tape rolling precisely at that exaltant moment of reunion, the track captures all the raw heat of a band whose pent up creative energies had finally been allowed to come out to play. It's a virtuosic, exuberant, chaotic celebration.

All three of the band's guitarists – Stu, Joey Walker and Cook Craig – shred it up on the tangled odyssey, pushing each other to yet more delirious heights as the fast-paced workout progresses. Frankly, it's sweaty work just listening to the three of them battle it out. The song does stop short of some of the more out-there experimentations heard elsewhere in the 'Gizzverse' in recent years. For example, the drop D, Mixolydian stylings – *remarkably* – feel fairly conventional by comparison to the extraterrestrial flavours of 2017's *Flying Microtonal Banana* album. As such, it doesn't sound as if there was any call for the band's bespoke guitars, which they'd had loaded with extra fret delineations, to be used.

Subsequent live performances point to Stu's 1967 Yamaha Flying Samurai, Joey Walker's Gibson SG Standard, and Cook Craig's Fender Jazzmaster being the most likely six-string suspects used on the track. All three guitars are enveloped by an intoxicating haze of fuzz, distortion and overdrive effects, with a maniacally seesawing wah pedal or two serving as the psychedelic cherry on top of this particularly trippy cake.

...MORE FIERY FRETWORK THAN MANY ARTISTS CAN MUSTER ACROSS AN ENTIRE ALBUM...

Photo Getty

02
Wet Leg
CHAISE LONGUE

Quite possibly the most infectious guitar-based smash of recent years, Chaise Longue catapulted Hester Chambers and Rhian Teasdale to notoriety – and a summer of back-to-back festival slots – before even being released as part of their self-titled debut album. The breakout hit – featuring tongue-in-cheek lyrical smut and a line pinched from the script of *Mean Girls* – is a riot of punky irreverence and wonky pop personality that captures the exhilaration of two musicians who'd recently discovered how much fun playing guitars and writing music together could be. Before Wet Leg, Teasdale didn't actually know how to play the instrument.

But the best part? *Chaise Longue* is literally a one-chord song. After keeping the listener waiting for a whole minute throughout the first verse, dual guitars explode into life when the chorus hits. Teasdale hammers out a barrage of G power chord downstrokes, played up at the 15th fret, while Chambers takes care of all that wonderful lead lick earwormery.

Though often seen wielding her beloved Hofner Galaxie on stage – or, more recently, a Fender Noventa Series Jazzmaster equipped with three P-90s – Hester cut the main hook on a Danelectro U2, and relied on Electro-Harmonix Soul Food and Keeley Loomer pedals for her fuzzy, reverby tones.

03
The 1975
HAPPINESS

True to its title, this mid-summer single served up a five minute slice of pure dance pop happiness. It's powered by Adam Hann and Matthew Healy's clean staccato guitar rhythms, and – in the name of swerving all things obvious – features a tidy acoustic guitar solo, suitably processed to fit the track's 80s aesthetic.

04
Steve Vai
LITTLE PRETTY

With this single from his *Inviolate* album, Vai professed to having "dug deep into my academic music theory mind" to create this harmonically complex, darkly hued funk-fusion exploration. Notably, he cut the track using a hollowbodied Gretsch rather than one of his more sportily designed Ibanez signatures – not that this slowed his limber soloing...

05
Alexisonfire
SANS SOLEIL

At once introspective, beautiful, sad and hopeful, this heartfelt ballad captures Wade MacNeil and Dallas Green at their nuanced best. 13 years since the previous Alexisonfire album, their layers of acoustic strumming, overdriven chord washes and melodic leads offer a masterclass in how sensitive playing choices can enhance lyrical meaning.

Photos Getty

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We present an amazingly rich and varied programme packed with all the guitar things you always wanted to know and be able to play! Blues, rock, jazz, acoustic and much more!

Tutors include **Neville Marten**, **Jason Sidwell**, **Jon Bishop**, **Gianluca Corona**, **Chris Quinn**, **John Wheatcroft**, **Tolis Zavaliaris** and **Chris Woods.**

15-20 august

TOP 40 AND FUNK with Jason Sidwell

This course is for guitarists that desire strong abilities to suit being in a band. This will include picking approaches and band relevant chord voicings to modes for soloing and exciting repertoire analysis with a bias towards funk and RnB legends like Chic, James Brown and Michael Jackson.

JUMP BLUES with Chris Corcoran

Referencing the big sound of '40s & '50s R&B and Jump Blues guitar, this course will give a fresh perspective on how to add drive, style and invention. Licks, riffs and phrases will be covered as well as the styles of guitarists like T-Bone Walker, Lonnie Johnson, Tiny Grimes and Barney Kessel.

BLUES SONGS with Neville Marten

The aim for this course is to cover a range of blues tunes from classic to more modern. The onus is on great blues songs that everyone will know and enjoy playing. Guitarists of every level will be able to join in, whether you can improvise full solos or just play chords and a few licks.

ACOUSTIC SONGS with Chris Quinn

This course focuses on roots based music, ranging from folk to blues songs. You will study guitar techniques used by some of the greats of popular songwriting and also touch on useful fingerstyle methods and open tunings.

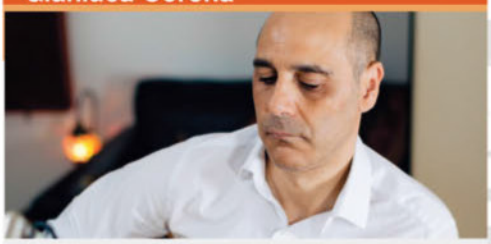
CLASSIC ROCK & INDIE ROCK with Jon Bishop

This course will cover many of the main components that guitarists use, ranging from scales and chord riffing through to string bending and use of harmonics. Lots of classic rock and indie riffs will be looked at with iconic songs.

MODERN ROCK with Tolis Zavaliaris

The focus of this course will be on relevant techniques, from picking to legato, and to improve and supercharge your rock guitar playing. Guitarists covered will range from Randy Rhoads to Paul Gilbert, Yngwie Malmsteen to Steve Vai.

JAZZ with Gianluca Corona



This course will cover the basics (extended chords, simple diatonic licks, swing feel, blues) through to more advanced concepts and devices (chord substitution, modal phrasing, outside playing).

GYPSY JAZZ with John Wheatcroft

This course will help to get your playing 'campfire jam' ready, with a hands on look at the fundamentals of this inclusive and engaging style – from using the correct chords and mastering 'La Pompe' to adding authentic licks and lines.

CREATIVE ACOUSTIC GUITAR with Chris Woods

This course shows how to turn your acoustic guitar into a full band using advanced techniques such as tapping and slapping.

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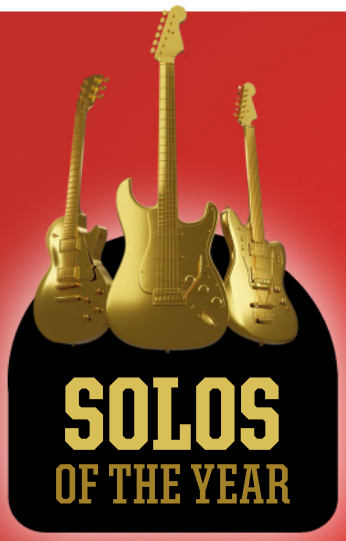
SHREDDERS
Steve Vai with Polyphia's Scott LePage (left) and Tim Henson (right)



Words Amit Sharma, Ellie Rogers

John Frusciante paid tribute to EVH. David Gilmour and Buddy Guy rolled back the years. But the most extraordinary solo of 2002 came from Steve Vai's collaboration with Polyphia...

01 Polyphia feat. Steve Vai Ego Death

THERE were plenty of interesting collaborations over the course of 2022, but arguably none quite as sonically tantalising as Polyphia partnering up with Steve Vai on the song *Ego Death*. As well as packing all the genre-crossing bravado and split coil spank we've grown to expect from guitarists Tim Henson and Scott LePage, the track was also representative of a changing of the guard – almost giving listeners front row seats at the passing of the torch between Ibanez-endorsing virtuosos from different generations. In the 80s and 90s, it was Steve Vai who was taking guitar music to new places and in the process redefining the very instrument in his hands. Decades later, similar things could be said about what Polyphia have managed to achieve over the course of their four albums, which explains why this partnership was a match made in heaven. As Vai himself explains to TG, hearing his own leads get severely dissected and remixed took some getting used to, but after his own initial ego death, the end result was something truly magnificent – documenting a musical conversation between great talents of different eras...

"I've been fortunate in being able to watch the evolution of guitar playing in various formats over the years," Steve says. "When Polyphia came along, I guess it was probably the third generation of musicians after mine. Each time there was a change I would see different things happening in terms of how people were playing the instrument. And when I first heard Tim Henson and Scott LePage I was totally blown away! I was impressed by not only the way they were playing their guitars, but also the music itself. So I kinda kept my eye on them and started following them.

"At that stage I didn't have any idea what their perspective on me was... those kinds of things can go either way, you know? They can either be very fan-oriented and know my records well, or be repelled by everything I've done! I eventually met Tim at a DiMarzio party and came to discover that they had been following me and counted themselves as fans. He asked me if I'd like to collaborate on one of their tracks and I said, 'Yeah, I'd love to, though I'd have to hear the song and see if it's something I feel I could properly contribute to!' Mainly because our styles of music are so different. And then the pandemic hit and everything shut down for a while. I didn't hear from them and figured that's fine – because people invite you to do things, you kinda talk about it, sometimes it happens and sometimes it doesn't. But then I got an email quite a while after that saying 'We have a track, we'd love you to listen to it!'

"When I gave it a listen, I started to think about what I could bring to the table. It was sort of quantized and the rhythms felt really rigid, which can give you a really cool feel for a particular type of groove. So I started constructing various solo areas in the several minutes they'd given me. My approach was 'I think this could use something long and melodic, ideas that had this other dimension. I thought it would be cool

Photo: Kevin Scanlon

if the trajectory of the notes felt like they were singing, as opposed to the very quick and snappy kind of playing Polyphia tend to do. I guess I felt that could bring a kind of contrast. So I did a bunch of sections and sent it back saying, 'Here you go, feel free to do whatever you want with it!' And once they heard it, they felt they needed to construct something around it that was more than just the vamp that they gave me – which was a decision I totally agreed with. Then they chopped it up and when they sent it back I was surprised that it was so chopped up!

"But eventually I saw the wisdom in it, because it was weird to have this whole section of another guitar player, you know? They were also aware of the video we'd be making together, in which they wanted it to be a trading ideas kind of thing. After I got over the initial shock over the editing, I thought the way they'd reconstructed it was perfect. And it should be for them. This had to come out the way they wanted it to. I ended up being really happy with the way it turned out. Then they said they wanted to do the video and I thought, 'Uh oh, now I've got to learn that stuff!' But I did, and it was great. We shot that stuff and it turned into a really nice video. I think my contribution added a contrast that was helpful – it ended up being melody lines instead of loads of really fast playing, which is what I originally set out to do.

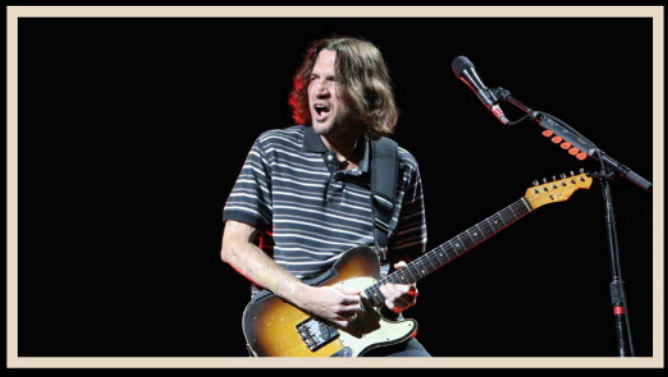
"Did I expect them to chop up my leads like that? I guess not, but they had a vision. And that vision was an evolved vision. You have to remember I'm 62 years old! My philosophy when it comes to my own music is different and my creativity will naturally have different parameters to a band who are contemporary. Like any musician, I construct things in my own way. If you compare any of my records to their records, it should be easy to see they have very different brain muscles. They have to march to the beat of their own internal creative drum, so to speak. Ultimately, they have to do what's right for them – it's their music and therefore it has to remain comfortable for them. There's no need to compromise. At the end of the day, the stuff they edited out was just fat... what we ended up with was more appropriate for their audience and the song itself."

"WHEN THEY SAID THEY WANTED TO DO A VIDEO I THOUGHT, 'UH OH – NOW I HAVE TO LEARN IT!'"

Photos: Kevin Scanlon / Larry DiMarzio

02 Pink Floyd
Hey Hey Rise Up

While the rest of their surprise anti-war single was a departure from classic Floyd – featuring the sampled vocals of Ukrainian singer Andriy Khlyvnyuk – all one minute and forty seconds of its tasteful, emotive solo certainly is classic David Gilmour. It's packed with heartfelt bends, languid phrasing and those signature glassy tones – all deployed to stirring effect. For this episode of exquisite wailing, Gilmour downed his trademark Strat in favour of the slightly coarser voice of his battered 'Workmate' 1955 Fender Esquire.



04 Red Hot Chili Peppers
Eddie

Although the influence has not always been obvious, John Frusciante loved Eddie Van Halen. Here, the Chili Pepper goes all-out in homage, following up a poignant mid-song solo with a fiery outro throwdown – complete with two-handed tapping, hammer-on flurries, whammy manhandling and a generous earful of feedback. It took Frusciante until the end of RHCP's 48-track recording session to perfect the balance of technique and emotion on what may be his most virtuosic solo yet.

03 Buddy Guy
I Let My Guitar Do The Talking

Even at the grand old age of 86, Buddy's chops are still so incendiary that it's probably wise to pack away anything flammable if you see him approaching with his signature Blonde Fender Stratocaster and Cry Baby in hand. In the extended solo in I Let My Guitar Do The Talking, the veteran Chicago bluesman does exactly as the song's title promises, showing off the full scope of his licks and tricks vocabulary – employing his trusty wah for oodles of playful speech-like expression.

05 Architects
A New Moral Low Ground

Capitalising on the tension built by a dynamically jam-packed arrangement, Josh Middleton's blistering, high-gain solo explodes into action right up at the business end of the fretboard, with eight bars of heavily treated melodic licks that ascend to nosebleed-inducing heights. This small but perfectly formed blowout from the ESP-toting metaller takes its spot at the climactic end of the track, leaving room for just one last double-time blast of its thunderous chorus to close out proceedings.

Photos Getty

Words Jenna Scaramanga, Paul Elliott

The Riffs of the Year

How to create a killer riff? Muse did it by going full-on metal, Ghost channeled their inner Def Leppard, and Animals As Leaders went where other bands fear to tread...

01 Muse
KILL OR BE KILLED

When Matt Bellamy spoke to TG in the summer, he said of Muse's ninth album *Will Of The People*: "I definitely think a bit more metal has crept in this time." He cited Slipknot and Iron Maiden as key influences, and that heaviness is most powerfully illustrated in the anthem *Kill Or Be Killed*. Now, Matt reveals how he created the riff of the year...

How did *Kill Or Be Killed* come together?
I asked Manson to build me a multi-scale/fan fret guitar, based on Nolly's Onyx, just to experiment with, and as soon as it arrived the riffs for *Kill Or Be Killed* and *Won't Stand Down* came pretty quickly while jamming. Originally the *Kill Or Be Killed* riff was more straightforward – no pitch shifting. But as with previous experiments with songs like *The 2nd Law: Unsustainable*, I decided to try pre-programming extreme whammy moves and program changes – that are not entirely possible by foot – to give the riff a more synth/modern feel to it.

What kind of pitch shifter did you use? Was it a latching/momentary switched unit or treadle-operated as per the Digitech Whammy?
I used a Digitech Whammy and programmed MIDI program changes into Pro Tools so it could jump between 2 octaves up, 1 octave up and bypassed. I automated some expression changes as well but did most of it with my foot in the studio during takes, so it wasn't all repetitive.

How do you do the pitch-shifting live?
As I like to be free to roam the stage and not be fixed to a pedal board position, I have the program changes and expression MIDI-automated for live shows. I hope one day to develop a user-friendly pedal so other players can enjoy this approach to automating impossible expression and program changes. I discovered this approach whilst making *Map Of The Problematique* from 2006, but took it much further in 2012 with *Unsustainable* and *Kill Or Be Killed*.

Are you particular about which of your guitars you use to play this track?
Yes, this song emerged from the Manson multi-scale/fan fret I had made, which was actually based on the signature guitar Manson made for the great 'Nolly' called 'Oryx'.

What can you tell us about the other textures behind the main guitar riff?
Quite a lot of different amp sounds were involved. This album, and this song in particular, is the first time I've used Orange [Rockerverb 100 MKIII] and MesaBoogie [Badlander] amps, well-known sounds associated with metal. Both were combined with my usual Diezel sound for most of the riffing. A Laney Klipp 100w amp, from the 1960s I think, appeared in the middle breakdown section of the song. For the solo, we used a Wampler clean-boost pedal into Diezel channel 3 with EFX2 tape delay and sx90 Chorus. In addition, the solo had automated pitch shifting [whammy] going from 2+ octave to 1+ octave to bypass on a crotchet triplet tempo, I think!

What other instruments feature – and how did you get the parts to work together?
In the verse, the cleaner guitar chords are doubled with a Wurlitzer, the latter going into a fender amp for some crunch which helps it blend with the guitar. The main riff has a pretty prominent synth, that was Serum [the plugin] with FilterFreak2 wah automation, into a Rat pedal, then Dwarfcraft Necromancer pedal for a bit of top fizz. The distortion pedals help the otherwise hyper-modern Serum synth fit in to a rock context.

You told TG that this album is influenced by Slipknot and Iron Maiden – was there a specific influence on *Kill Or Be Killed*?
Not on a particular song, but overall working in a drop B tuning was a common theme we noticed when checking out our favourite Slipknot riffs, like *Duality*. Also we looked up what amps they use and came across the Orange, so that amp's presence in the studio was a direct influence from Slipknot.

And has *Kill Or Be Killed* turned into a live banger as expected?
Yes! Unusually it was instantly liked by fans when we debuted it live months before we released the song. I can't remember the last time that happened!

Photo Kevin Nixon

Manson
NO HIGH ON
LOW OFF

02
Animals As Leaders
MICRO-AGGRESSIONS

In *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure*, a time-travelling Ludwig van Beethoven goes nuts in a music shop, soundtracked by Nuno Bettencourt's neo-classical shredding. For 2020 sequel *Bill & Ted Face The Music*, Tosin Abasi provided the air guitar sound effects, and *Micro-Aggressions* reminds us why he was the perfect choice. The face-melting opening is an updated take on Nuno's combination of palm-muting, legato and open strings, played with blistering pace.

It's hard to pinpoint exactly where the riff begins and ends, because the song is more like a classical composition with themes that develop and evolve. Until the solo at 2:15, it feels like one continuous section. It's all in 4/4 (or at least it's possible to count it that way!), but it feels like the time signatures are changing thanks to switches between sextuplet and heavily syncopated 16th note rhythms. The drum accents aren't where you'd expect either, which makes things feel even more off-balance. When the band drop out for the jaw dropping multi-octave arpeggios at 0:29 and 0:45, Abasi unleashes a nifty minor-major 7 which sounds classical without parroting Yngwie Malmsteen's much-copied diminished shapes. If that's too much theory, just listen to it – it rocks.

03
Ghost
CALL ME LITTLE SUNSHINE

We couldn't have predicted Ghost would get so big, but we're glad they have. The chiming, clean intro reminds us how, on *One* and *Enter Sandman*, James Hetfield threw in an open G amid the fretted notes for extra jangle and sustain. *Call Me Little Sunshine*, like *Sandman*, builds from a clean intro into a crushing distorted version of the same riff, but Ghost's riff is a longer, winding cruncher at a plodding pace. The guitars mostly play in unison, but they slip into harmony twice for a touch of 80s metal flare, including a glorious trill that makes us imagine Nigel Tufnel sticking his tongue out.

Ghost mastermind Tobias Forge said he tried to emulate Def Leppard for the *Impera* album, and there's something of Leppard's *Too Late For Love* in the way the layered guitars seem to drive forward despite the low tempo. It's hardly a rip-off though – Leppard singer Joe Elliott has said he can't hear the influence – and the thudding power chords recall Black Sabbath at least as much. The touches of harmony are pure Iron Maiden, and the lyrical references to Aleister Crowley aren't the only reminder of early Ozzy. It's like a guided tour of metal greatness, while still managing to sound fresh.

Photos Getty

04
Nova Twins
PUZZLES

Puzzles isn't the most obvious riff on *Supernova*, but it might be the one that most demonstrates what Nova Twins are about. Unlike first single *Antagonist*, which kicked in with big and obvious guitar riff, *Puzzles* doesn't show its hand until after the first verse. *Antagonist* is pretty straightforward. The tones are cool and modern, but it isn't hard to figure out. We'd have to think pretty hard about how to tab *Puzzles*, though – none of it really sounds like a guitar, and the falling effect at 0:30 isn't a noise that's ever come out of any of our amps. Every sound is live guitar and bass, however.

Puzzles is also, it must be said, one of the *horniest* songs of 2022. It's *slightly* more subtle than Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion's *WAP*, but in the tradition of Missy Elliott and Lil' Kim, it's a song by women proud of their sexuality. Its riff embodies that entire vibe, pulsing and writhing in a way that's frankly indecent. It's sweaty and nasty, but it's completely unlike Led Zeppelin or any of the myriad rock bands who've written filthy lyrics with filthier riffs. It sounds like dancing in a club at 2 o'clock in the morning.

05
Alter Bridge
SILVER TONGUE

The opening seconds of *Silver Tongue* sound like Mark Tremonti's take on Muse's *Stockholm Syndrome*, a rapid alternate-picked sequence switching between fretted and open notes on the bottom string. As soon as the band kicks in, though, the comparison ends. *Silver Tongue* is a crunching beast of a riff delivered via Tremonti and Myles Kennedy's enormous guitar tone. In *Sad But True*, Metallica dropped in occasional quarter note triplets for a really slamming effect. Here, Alter Bridge use the same trick, but it's not occasional. The triplets are everywhere, thudding into your ears like an approaching giant, making the ground shake. Occasional bursts of 16th notes are synced with the kick drum, punctuating the riff like gunfire.

Tuned to drop C♯, it's basically a blues scale riff, but the first three notes of the main section ascend chromatically from the ♭7 to the root. There are two melodic fragments between the power chords: the ascending chromatic sequence, and a descending blues scale one. They're both three notes long and they both use chromatic notes, so they're mirror images of each other, pulling in opposite directions. The tension between the guitar and drums is what makes the riff so damn powerful.

Words & Music Charlie Griffiths

Play Like the Stars of 2022

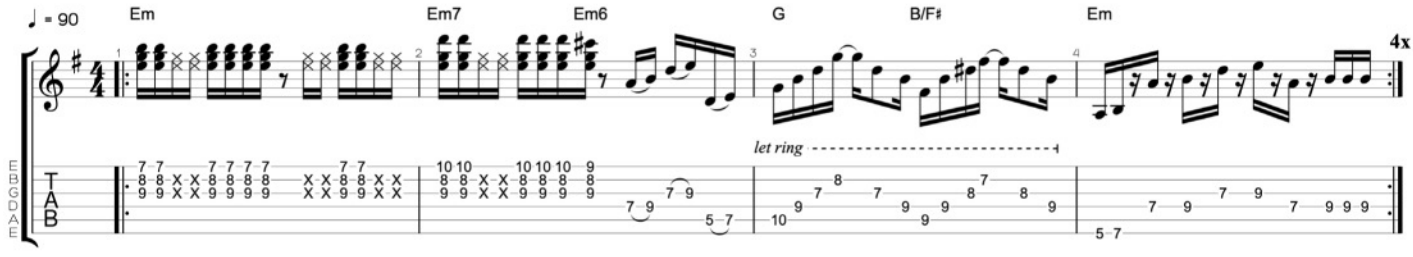
Take your pick from an Eric Gales-style blues lick, a proggy King Gizzard-style riff and much more...

LEFT HAND PATH
Blues master Eric Gales

Photo Getty

JOHN FRUSCIANTE

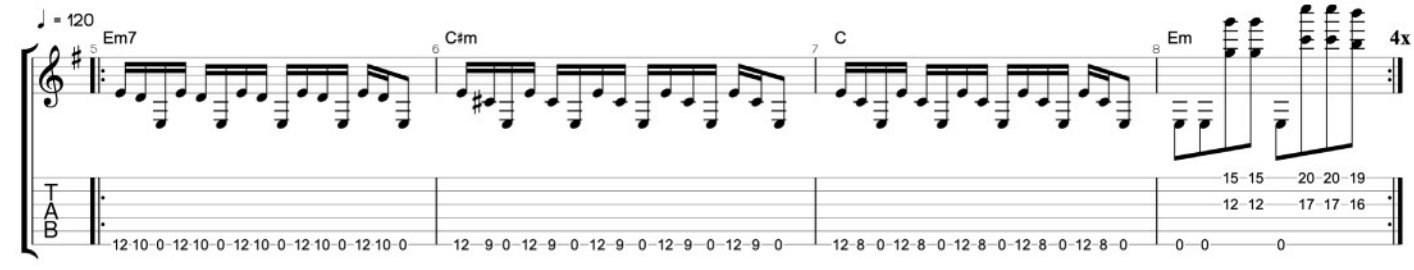
BIT.LY/TG355AUDIO



Play the Em triad with fingers 1, 2 and 3 and use 4th finger to add the variations on the 1st string. Keep your strumming hand moving down and up, so the chords and muted notes have consistent timing. In bar 3, play the full chord shapes and use your pick to arpeggiate while the notes ring together.

MATT BELLAMY

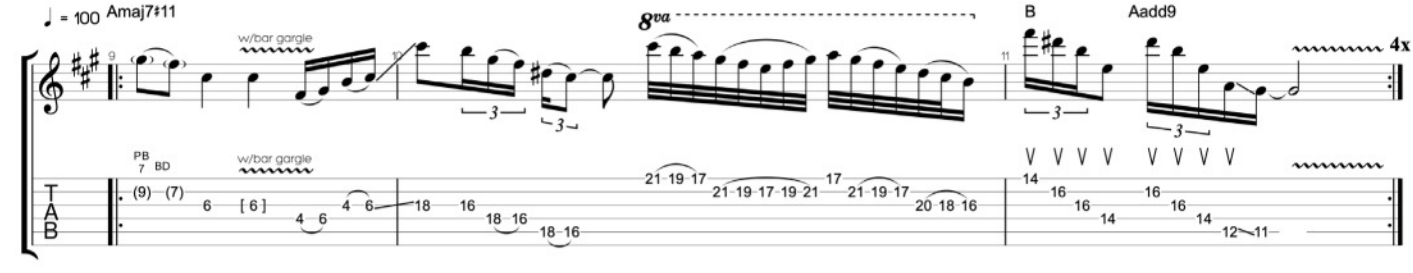
BIT.LY/TG355AUDIO



Use alternate picking to play these notes on the 6th string and focus on keeping even 16th notes, while the riff is based on a 3-note arpeggio phrases to create rhythmic interest. Play the octave shapes in bar 4 with fingers 1 and 4, while muting the 2nd string with your fingers too.

STEVE VAI

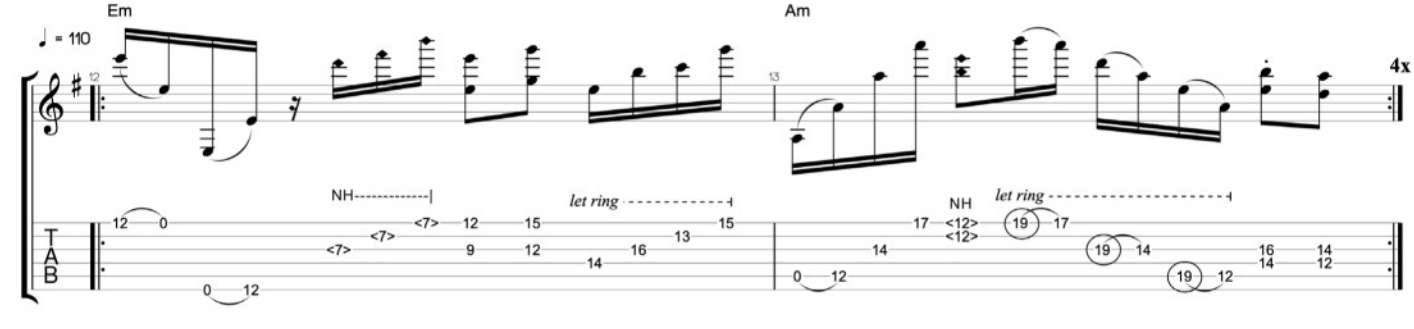
BIT.LY/TG355AUDIO



This lick is based in A Lydian mode [1-2-3-#4-5-6-7] and starts with a full tone pre-bend at the 7th fret, followed by a bend down. After playing the 6th fret, flick the whammy bar to gargle the note. Next se hammer-ons on frets 4 and 6 before sliding up an octave, followed by some fast fluid Lydian legato notes using fingers 1, 2 and 4. Finish the lick with some arpeggios, played with upward pick sweeps.

TIM HENSON

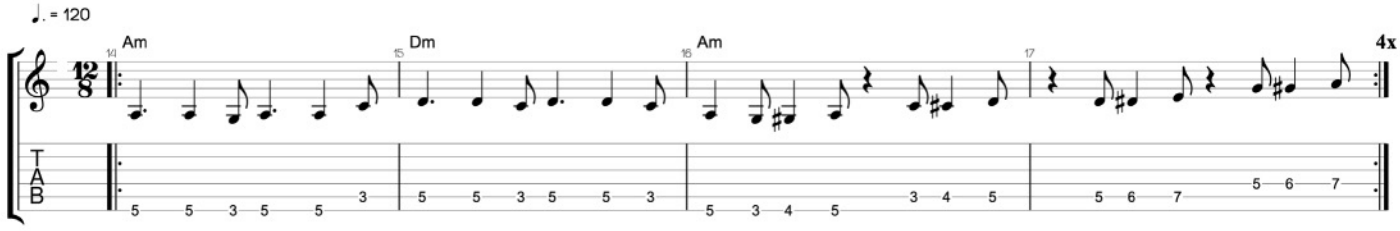
BIT.LY/TG355AUDIO



This part uses notes from E Aeolian [1-2-b3-4-5-b6-b7] to traverse the fretboard. Pull-off on the 1st string with 3rd finger, then hammer-on to 6th string with 2nd finger before plucking the natural harmonics at the 7th fret. Next climb up the neck with octave strums, ringing arpeggios and hammer-ons, culminating in tapping at the 19th

JACK WHITE

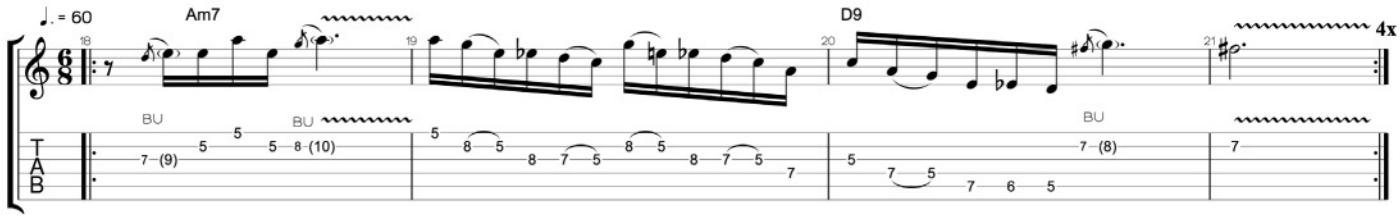
BIT.LY/TG355AUDIO



Play this riff with a shuffle feel, which is best approached with alternate picking, but ensuring that the downstroke is twice the length as the upstroke throughout. Use a fuzzy tone and hit the strings confidently to create some Jack White energy, while using the underside of your fretting fingers to keep the unused strings muted.

ERIC GALES

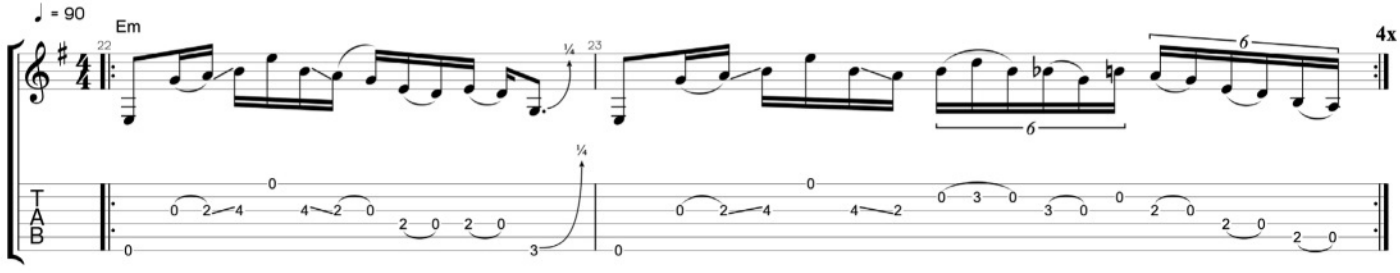
BIT.LY/TG355AUDIO



This lick is based in A Blues scale [1-b3-4-b5-5-b7] with a 6th added over the D9 chord. Bend the notes in Bar 1 with your 3rd finger, using 2nd finger for support. Next descend the scale in three 6-note sequences, using pull-offs and picking to create a smooth flow of notes. Finish the lick with a semitone bend at the 7th fret.

REBECCA LOVELL

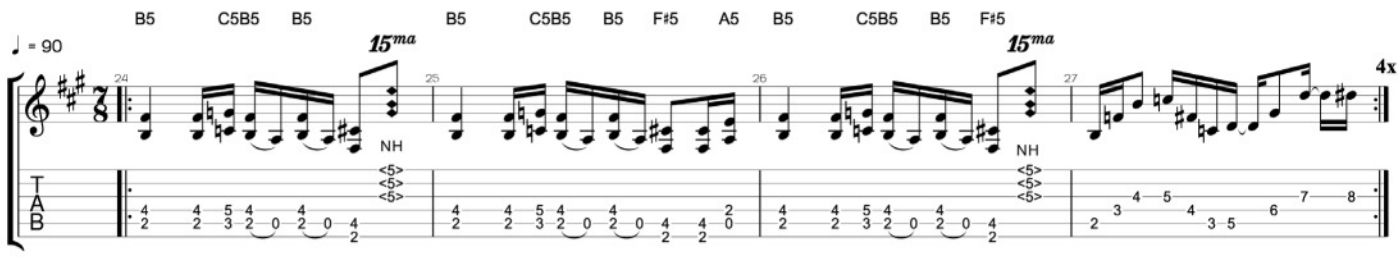
BIT.LY/TG355AUDIO



This riff is based in E blues scale [1-b3-4-b5-5-b7] in the open position. Use hammer-ons, pull-offs and slides, played with 16th notes, finishing the first bar with a 1/4 tone bend on the 6th string. In bar 2 we switch to a faster sextuplet phrasing.

STU MACKENZIE

BIT.LY/TG355AUDIO



This powerchord based riff is in a proggy 7/8 time, which is an eighth-note shorter than 4/4. For some contrast In-between the powerchords pick out quick natural harmonic 'stab' by resting 2nd finger on the treble strings at the 5th fret and releasing as soon as you strum.

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Words Jonathan Horsley

The Gear of the Year

The six-strings, amps and effects pedals that have had us reaching for the indigestion tablets as the GAS takes hold...

ELECTRIC GUITARS

01 PRS SE Silver Sky £895

One of the most controversial electric guitars of the 21st century was also one of its most brilliant – John Mayer colluding with Paul Reed Smith on an iconoclastic take on an early-60s Strat, foregrounding playability and tone, and finishing it off with a reverse headstock. The arrival of the more affordable SE model was arguably *the* guitar story of the year, and presented players with a ridiculously classy instrument with a faultless build, superb playability, all kinds of top-tier S-style sounds, and finishes you would want to sink your teeth into. For £895, Paul Reed Smith can't make you look like John Mayer, and he can't make you play like him, but he *can* make you sound like him.

Photos Olly Curtis / Neil Godwin / Phil Barker

02 Cort G290 FAT II £639

The FAT returns upgraded with a roasted maple neck, a typically top-tier build and it's ridiculous value – a do-everything electric.

03 Epiphone Noel Gallagher Riviera £789

In 2021, you'd have more chance of finding Noel and Liam singing *Parklife* in the Old Trafford boardroom than snaring such a keenly-priced semi-hollow beaut. Well played, 2022.

04 Fender Player Plus Meteroa HH £879

A fresh offset from the Big F with a pair of excellent humbuckers and S1 switching to cover all tonal bases. Radical, versatile and super cool.

05 Manson Meta MBM-2 P-90 £569

With a P-90 at the neck and a bridge humbucker, this Matt Bellamy-approved T-style has found the ideal pickup combo – and there's a killswitch for kicks.

ACOUSTIC GUITARS

01 Fender Player Series Acoustasonic Telecaster £1049

Is it an acoustic? Is it electric? Why not both? Launched in 2019, the American Acoustasonic series absorbed much of the shock of the new as guitarists reckoned with this new hybrid form, but by now, we're all just happy to see get our hands on one of these for under a grand street. The feature set has been scaled back but the iconoclastic vibe is undiminished – so too the playing experience for anyone just getting to grips with one of these. Some of the digitally modelled acoustic sounds you have at your disposal are truly jaw-dropping to hear coming out of your amp, and when combined with that electric neck feel, it just feels so weird and new, yet so very right.

02 Guild A-20 Marley £359

Based on the reggae icon's favourite at-home strummer, this keenly priced dreadnought makes a fine workhorse, the kind to play all day and write songs on.

03 Ibanez TOD10N Tim Henson £659

And for their next trick, Polyphia popularise the nylon-string electro-acoustic with the virtuoso *Playing God*, daring Ibanez into building this platform for showcasing god-like chops.

04 Sheeran By Lowden Equals Edition £995

The stadium-filling loop monster celebrates more platinum on the wall with his latest collab with ace luthier George Lowden. Compact, sweet-sounding, immaculately built, it's a keeper.

05 Fender Paramount PD-220E £995

The benchmark mid-priced dreadnought, with heaps of vibe and mojo, and a powerful voice with warmth and enough upper-mid sweetness to make it handle all styles.

AMPLIFIERS

01 Positive Grid Spark Mini £182

A smaller 10w version of the ultimate at-home digital combo, this takes the feature-packed Spark and shrinks it down. Not that the original 40W desktop amp was a Plexi stack, but this makes for an even more compact experience, improbably so when you consider that this does all that its larger sibling does. Hook it up to the app and you've got Smart Jam to create rhythm tracks to play over – excellent for writing, invaluable for practice – or ToneCloud, where fellow players and Positive Grid make presets available, and then there's the Auto Chord that transcribes songs into a real-time chord sheet. For its size, the sounds are awesome, and you've got 33 amp models and 43 effects to choose from.

02 Blackstar Dept 10 Amped. 1 £439

A feature-packed pedalboard powerhouse with five power tube responses, one Linear mode for total transparency, onboard Cab Rig tech, and all the connections you need.

03 Fender Pro Junior IV SE £399

Everyone loves a compact tube combo, and few do them quite like Fender. This has 15W, a single-channel, and is responds beautifully to your playing.

04 Line 6 Catalyst 100 £465

The evolution of Line 6's digital amp modelling continues apace with the super-classy Catalyst series: brilliant amp models and effects, scalable power, and excellent recording tool.

05 PRS HDRX 20 £799

The latest from PRS's Hendrix-inspired amp line offers British blues-rock JTM45 tones in a convenient 20-watt format. Built like a tank, sensibly priced, total Woodstock vibes.

EFFECTS / MULTI-EFFECTS

01 Boss GX-100 £489

With the long-awaited addition of a touchscreen to its amp modeller and multi-effects units, Boss is giving players more control over their sounds than ever before, and that is great news considering how many features there are in this pro-quality unit. Built like a tank, the GX-100 is an intuitive platform for sonic exploration, with drag-and-drop signal chain editing a revelation. The sounds migrated here from the GT-1000, you can be assured they are top-shelf; the amp models are bang on, touch-sensitive, spookily realistic, and the effects are just what you would expect from Boss.

02 Walrus Slötvå Multi Texture Reverb £209

Via a trio of reverb algorithms and a trio of modulation wave shapes, Slötvå sends your tone through time and space – the ultimate ambience pedal?

03 TC Electronic SCF Gold £149

With a beyond lush triumvirate of chorus, flanger and pitch modulation in one, this revised reissue of TC Electronic's debut stompbox is an instant classic.

04 HeadRush MX5 £399

Power, portability, high-performance sounds, the MX5 is awesome, and it is compact enough to be added to a pedalboard to create a formidable fly rig.

05 SoundLad Liverpool Scran £99

Hand-made in Liverpool, this is a keenly priced Brit-rock drive to burn with an amp-like feel – a pedalboard essential for Oasis fans, but indeed much, much more.

RAINBOW
SINCE YOU BEEN GONE

Learn *that* iconic riff, rock out and let your hair down with Rainbow's classic rock masterpiece

Photo: Getty; Guitars and backing: Jon Bishop

This month's track is an epic slice of classic rock recorded by Rainbow in 1979 for their fourth studio album *Down To Earth*.

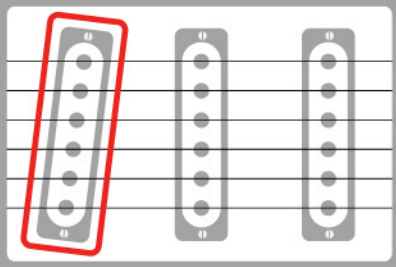
The song starts out with the classic powerchord riff in the key of G. This riff is used for the chorus and makes up the main body of the song. The verse features a tricky arpeggio part that may be worth spending some time playing through slowly. Then there's an interlude featuring tasteful lead guitar melodies, before leading into the key change, which lifts the song at the end and leads nicely into the guitar solo – a masterclass in tasteful phrasing. The emphasis here is on the melody and the placement of the phrases as opposed to getting carried away with too many notes.

SOUND ADVICE

Everything you need to know before playing 'Since You Been Gone'

GET THE TONE

CHANNEL OVERDRIVE/CLEAN

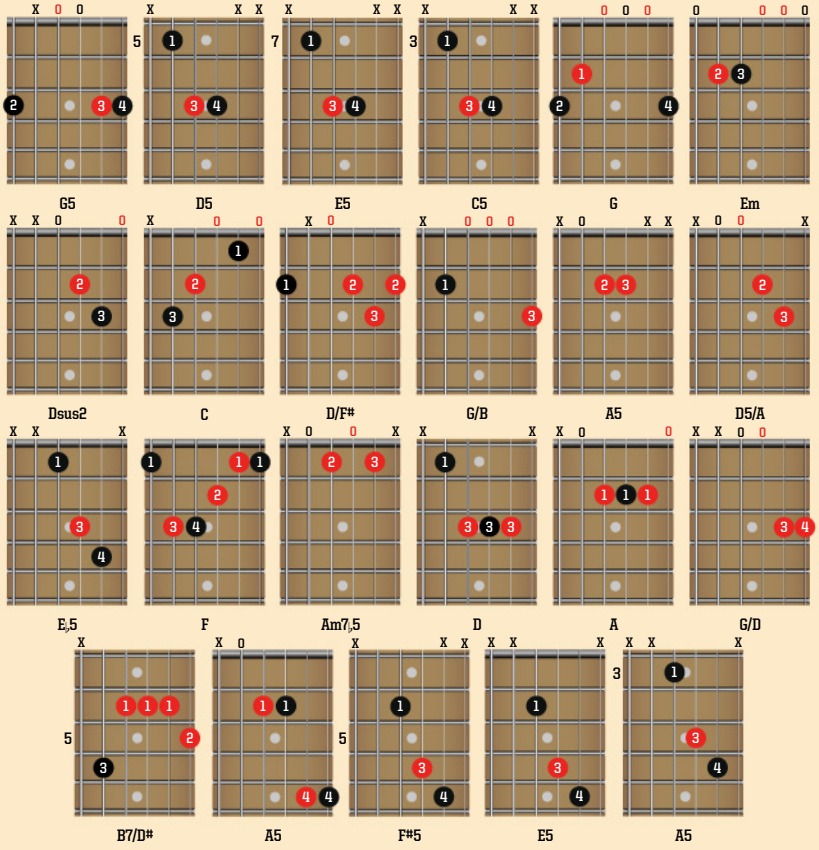


EFFECTS
Overdrive with a touch of reverb, Possible Lead Channel Boost or O/D Pedal Boost for the Solo, Clean sound with chorus pedal for the verse arpeggios.

At the time *Since You Been Gone* was recorded, high-gain amps weren't readily available. Guitarist Ritchie Blackmore used a treble booster to push a bit more overdrive and sustain out of his Marshall stack. The resulting overdrive is punchy, but not overly distorted so set up your amp for a medium overdrive that maintains the clarity of the notes of the chords. Select the bridge pickup on your guitar and you are good to go. There is one bit of whammy bar vibrato in the outro solo, but if your guitar is not equipped with one it's certainly not the end of the world. A bit of subtle chorus can be used to bring those verse arpeggios to life.

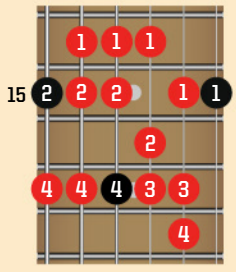
CHORDS

Since You Been Gone has no less than 23 chords to learn. Due to the various key changes, however, a few of these shapes are the same, but just shifted around the fret board. We have written out all of the complete fingerings for the chords. Ritchie Blackmore often selects two or three notes out of these chord fingerings to construct the riffs and arpeggio lines.

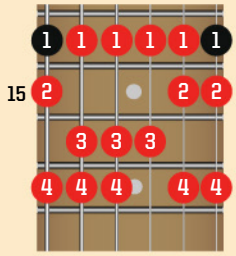


SCALES

You can solo over any section of the song before the key change fairly safely using the G mixolydian mode. We have also included a fingering for the A mixolydian mode. This is the scale that is used to create the guitar solo after the key change. The guitar solo is well constructed and features many of Blackmore's trademarks such as soulful string bending, finger vibrato and great phrasing.



G mixolydian scale



A mixolydian scale

RAINBOW
SINCE YOU BEEN GONE

FULL TAB

SINCE YOU BEEN GONE
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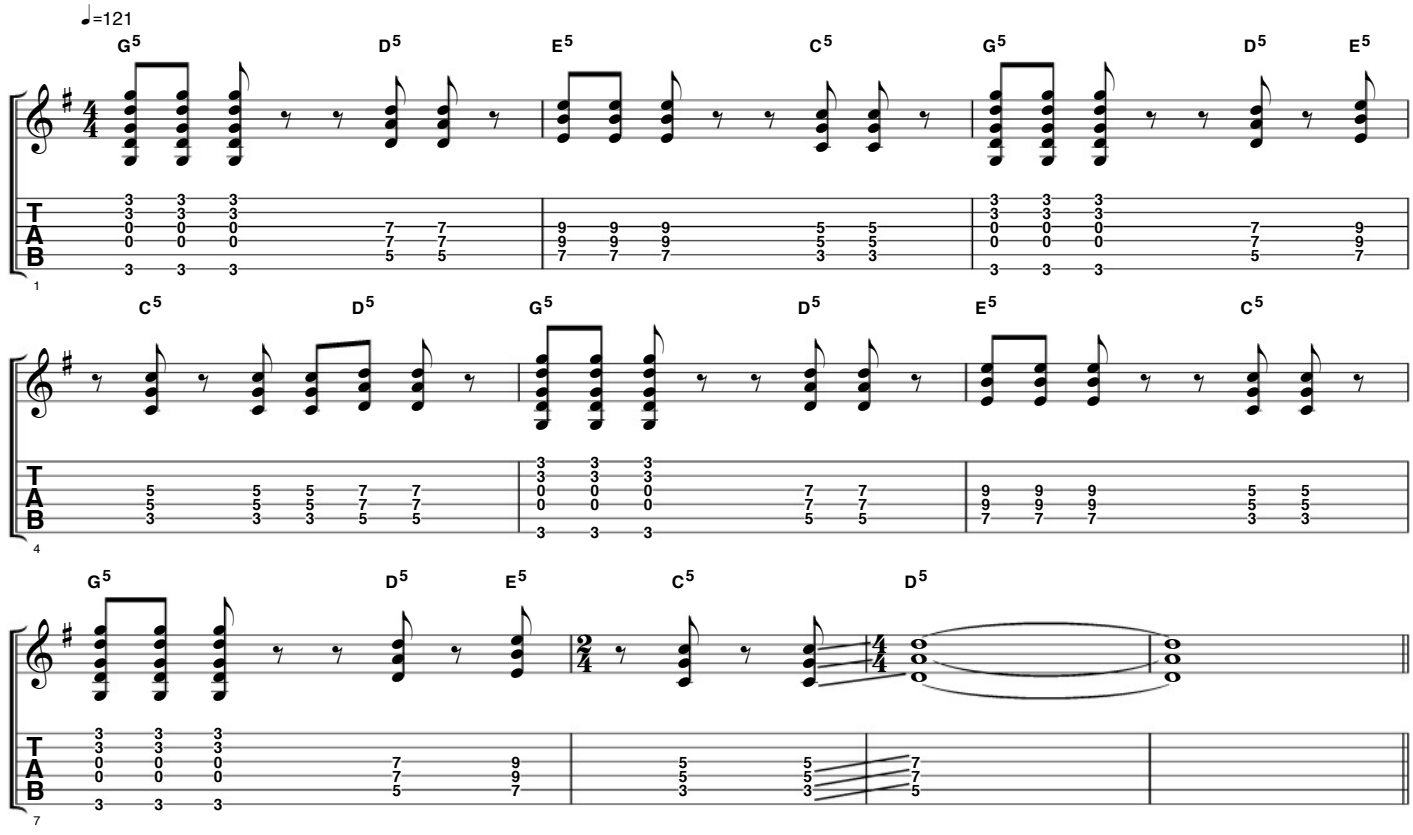
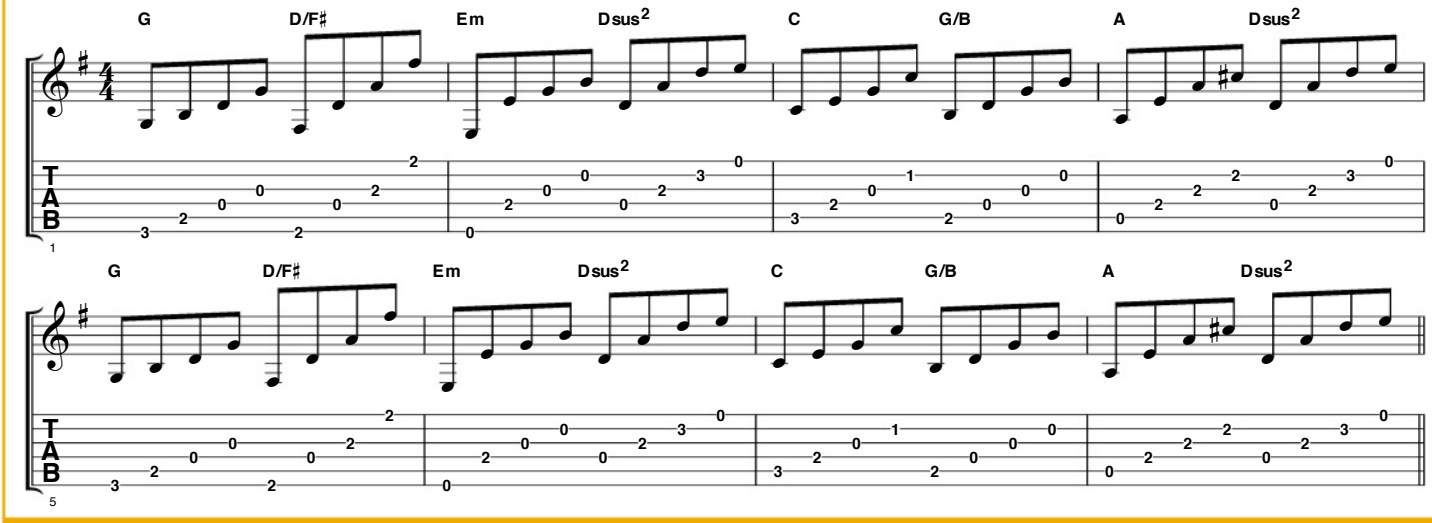
RAINBOW SINCE YOU BEEN GONE Intro

BIT.LY/TG366AUDIO



The intro features that iconic riff and this riff is also the mainstay of the chorus. The power chords here are tried and tested fingerings and sound great with a medium overdrive. Using down picking throughout will help maintain a solid delivery and an even dynamic.

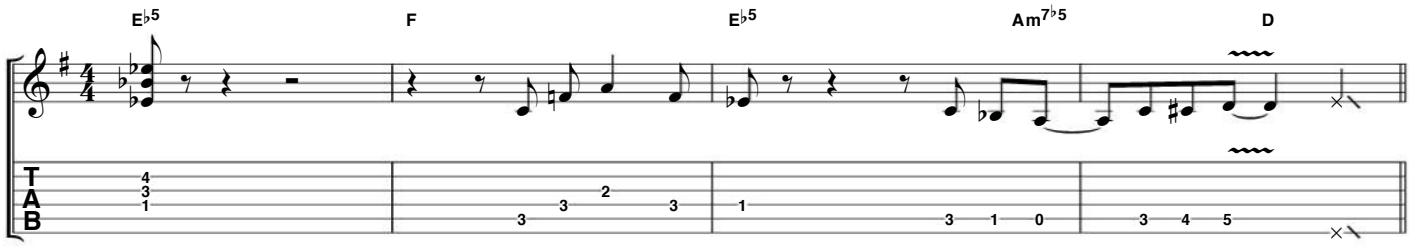
RAINBOW SINCE YOU BEEN GONE Verses 1 & 2



For the verse section, switch to a clean sound. The arpeggios here are a little awkward to pick at first. You can experiment with using alternate picking, but if this is too tricky then it may be best to experiment with a picking pattern that you feel most comfortable with.

RAINBOW SINCE YOU BEEN GONE Bridge

BIT.LY/TG366AUDIO



The bridge section features some single note riffs. These are constructed from notes of the chords and there is also a little bit of chromatic flavor. Again, down-picking is the way forward here.

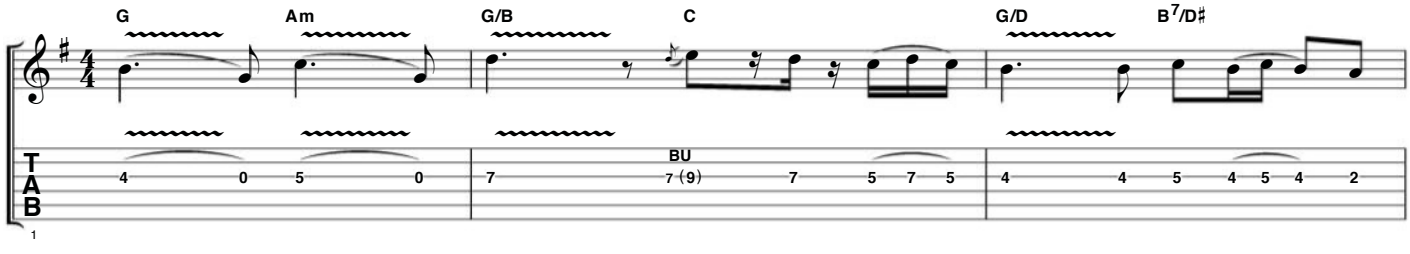
RAINBOW SINCE YOU BEEN GONE Chorus 1 & 2

BIT.LY/TG366AUDIO

The chorus section uses the intro riff as the backdrop.

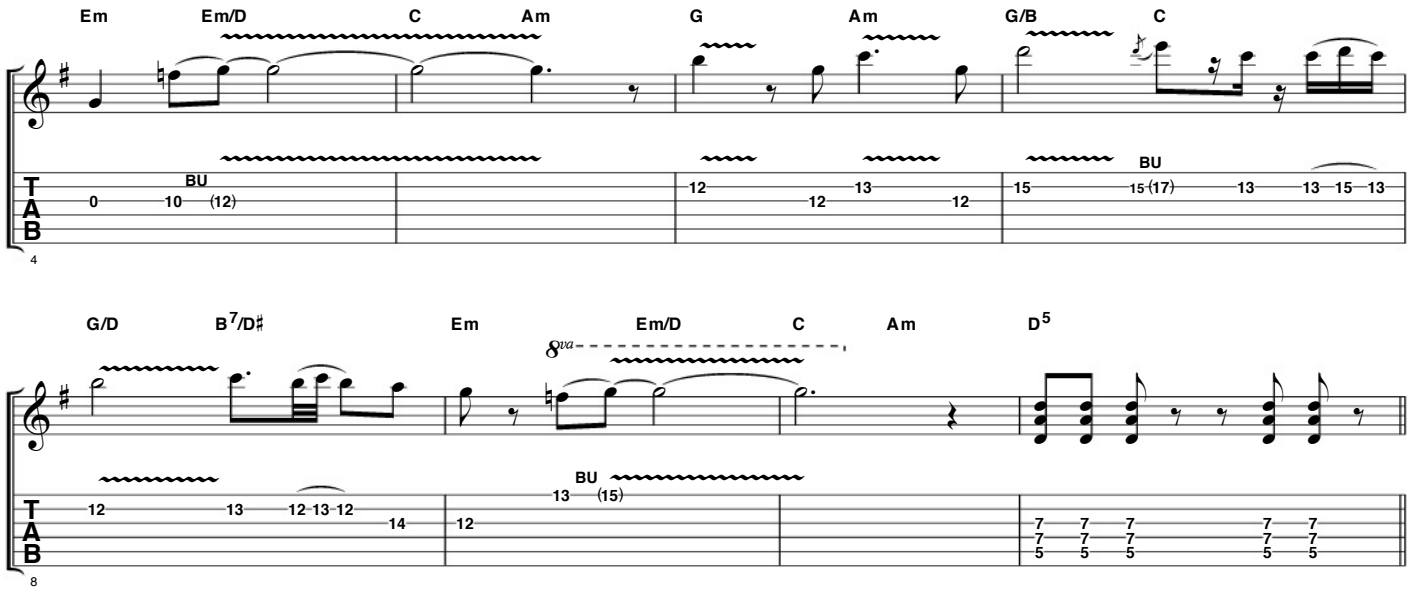
RAINBOW SINCE YOU BEEN GONE Interlude

BIT.LY/TG366AUDIO



RAINBOW SINCE YOU BEEN GONE Interlude (continued)

BIT.LY/TG366AUDIO

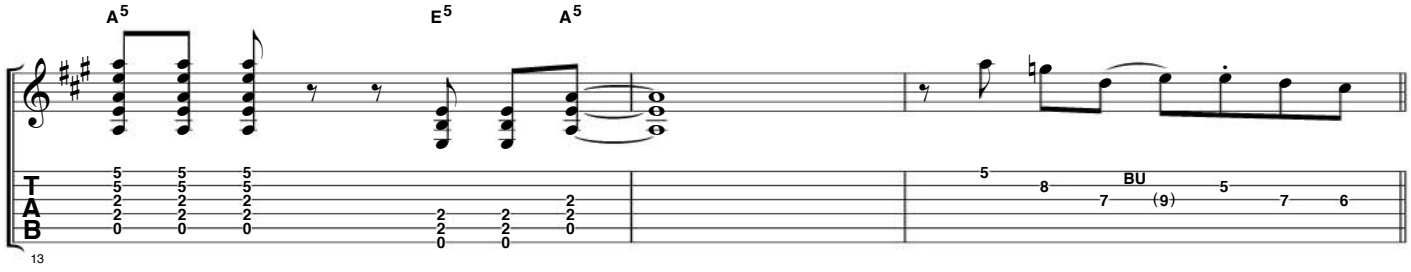


The interlude features some tasteful lead guitar melodies and this takes us into the key-change chorus.

RAINBOW SINCE YOU BEEN GONE Chorus (key change)

BIT.LY/TG366AUDIO

RAINBOW SINCE YOU BEEN GONE Chorus (key change, continued) **BIT.LY/TG366AUDIO**



The key change chorus follows the same rhythmic pattern as the original chorus. However, we are one tone up in the key of A. To provide a bit of variety, some chromatic chord movement is added in (F♯5 – F5).

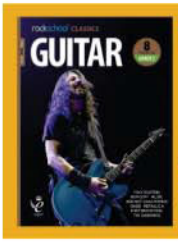
RAINBOW SINCE YOU BEEN GONE Solo **BIT.LY/TG366AUDIO**

The guitar solo starts with some quirky country-style bends. The solo will sound most authentic if played with your fingers as opposed to a pick. This may take a little practice, but the extra tone and facility the fingers can provide is well worth it. There are some intricate passages here, so we'd recommend learning this solo slowly in bitesize pieces.

METALLICA
SAD BUT TRUE

TG and Rockschool explore James Hetfield's guitar mastery in one of Metallica's career-defining releases

Released as the fifth single from Metallica's eponymous fifth album (also known as The Black Album), 'Sad But True' carries the hallmarks of a classic metal track. For the ominous-sounding opening chords (A5–B♭5), aim for clear contrast between the non-muted power chords and palm-muted 'chugs' (bars 1–2), then ensuring that no unwanted strings are ringing over the single-note lines in bars 3 and 4. In bars 7–14, try to keep the rhythms as even as possible, focusing on the accuracy of your fretting hand for the pull-offs (e.g., bar 7, beat 3, beat 4). There are only two repeated bars of the verse riff in this Rockschool arrangement, and these riffs again require clarity between unmuted partial chords and palm-muted open E strings. Watch out for the placement of the chords that follow in the chorus (bars 17–20), as these sometimes change in unexpected places (for instance, the A5 on beat 3 of bar 18).



RSL Awarding the Contemporary Arts

Whether you're taking your first steps on guitar or moving into further/higher education, a Rockschool Grade will improve your playing ability whilst you learn iconic tracks from the world of popular music. For more info visit: www.rslawards.com

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SAD BUT TRUE
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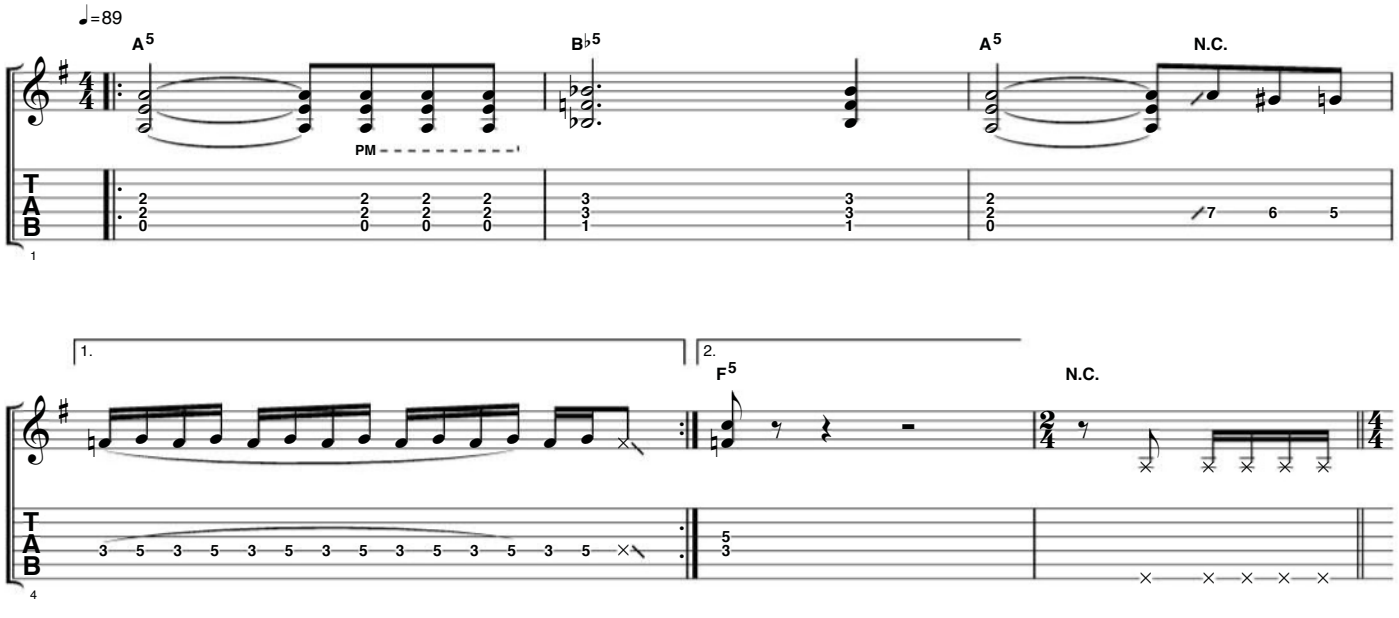
METALLICA SAD BUT TRUE **BIT.LY/TG366AUDIO**



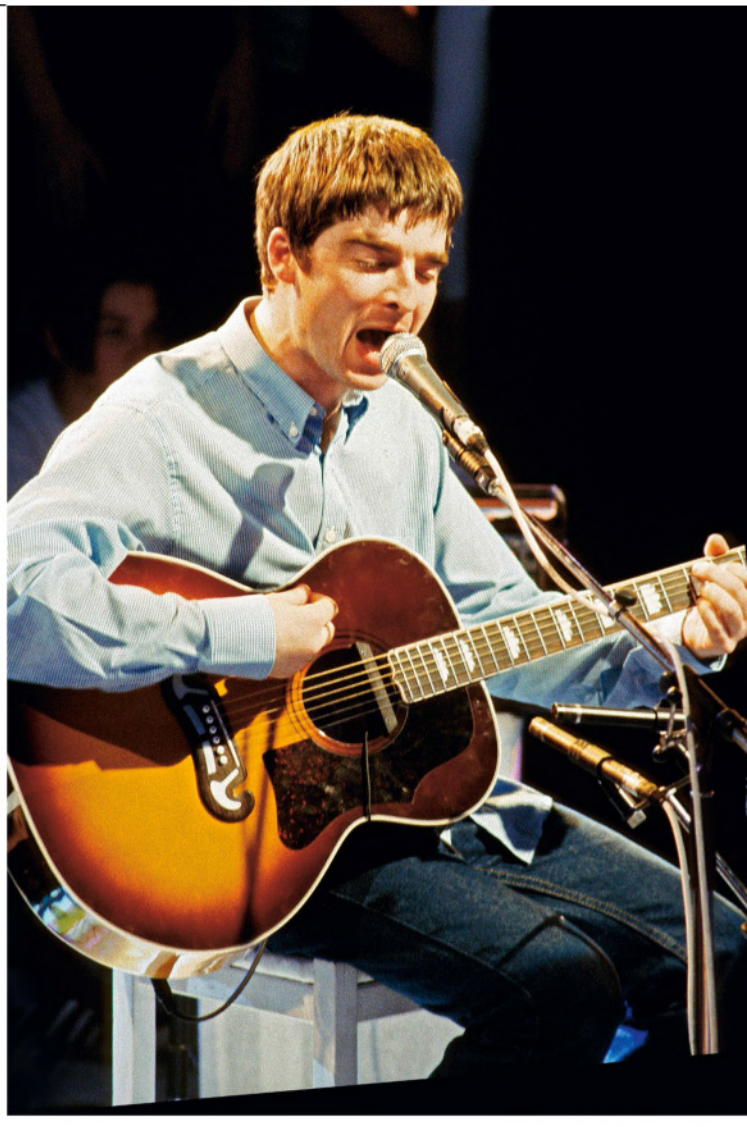
Words Jono Harrison Photo Getty

METALLICA SAD BUT TRUE **BIT.LY/TG366AUDIO**

METALLICA SAD BUT TRUE **BIT.LY/TG366AUDIO**

METALLICA SAD BUT TRUE **BIT.LY/TG366AUDIO**

For the solo (bars 33–42), you could explore E minor pentatonic ideas as a starting point over the E5 chords, before experimenting with additional notes drawn from scales such as E natural minor (E aeolian), E phrygian, E blues, etc. Try to save some rhythmic intensity for later in the solo, as this will give you room to build tension. There are only six bars of E5, before the harmony shifts to A5/G5 chords (bars 39–42). For these bars, you could try using an A phrygian dominant scale here for real atmosphere (A-B♭-C♯-D-E-F-G).



OPEN-MIC SONGBOOK

OASIS
HALF THE WORLD AWAY

Try out Noel Gallagher's cool arpeggios and Bonehead's strummed acoustic chords as TG looks at one of the band's best loved songs

Half The World Away was originally released as a B-side to the single *Whatever* in 1994, but became perhaps Oasis' best-known non-album track when it was used as the theme music to the long-running BBC sitcom, *The Royle Family*. The recording is a stripped down affair with Noel Gallagher providing the vocals, guitar and drums, and Paul 'Bonehead' Arthurs playing acoustic guitar and keyboards. As the chord progression and top-line melody are so strong, the song is ideally suited to a solo acoustic

CHORDS

Most of the chords are typical open shapes you may have seen before, but there are some trickier shapes such as Fmaj7, which has the thumb over the top of the neck to fret the root note; if this is uncomfortable simply leave the low F note out. For the slash chords (C/B, G/B and G7/F) use the underside of your first or second fingers to touch and mute the idle strings and prevent them from ringing out when strumming.

HALF THE WORLD AWAY
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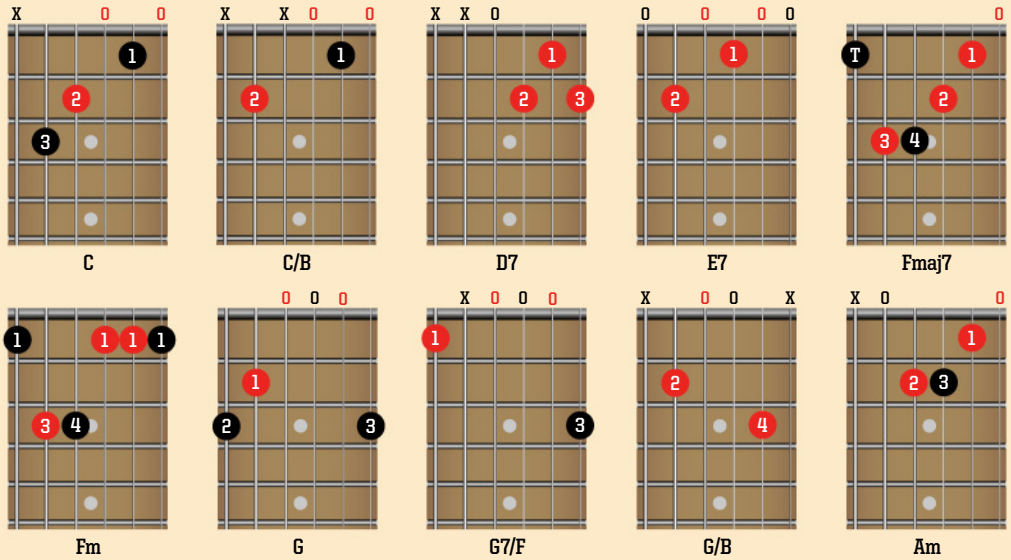


Guitars and backing Charlie Griffiths Photo Getty

BACKING TRACK (BIT.LY/TG366AUDIO)
This song comes with a full backing track. Enter the above link into your web browser of choice; press play and jam along, guitaraoke style!

SONGSHEET

Half The World Away

Intro / Instrumental
C / / / Fmaj7 / / / C / / / Fmaj7 / / /

Verse 1
C Fmaj7
I would like to leave this city
C Fmaj7
This old town don't smell too pretty and
C G/B Am
I can feel the warning signs
D7 Fmaj7
Running around my mind
C Fmaj7
And when I leave this island
C Fmaj7
I'll book myself into a soul asylum
C G/B Am
'Cause I can feel the warning signs
D7 Fmaj7
Running around my mind

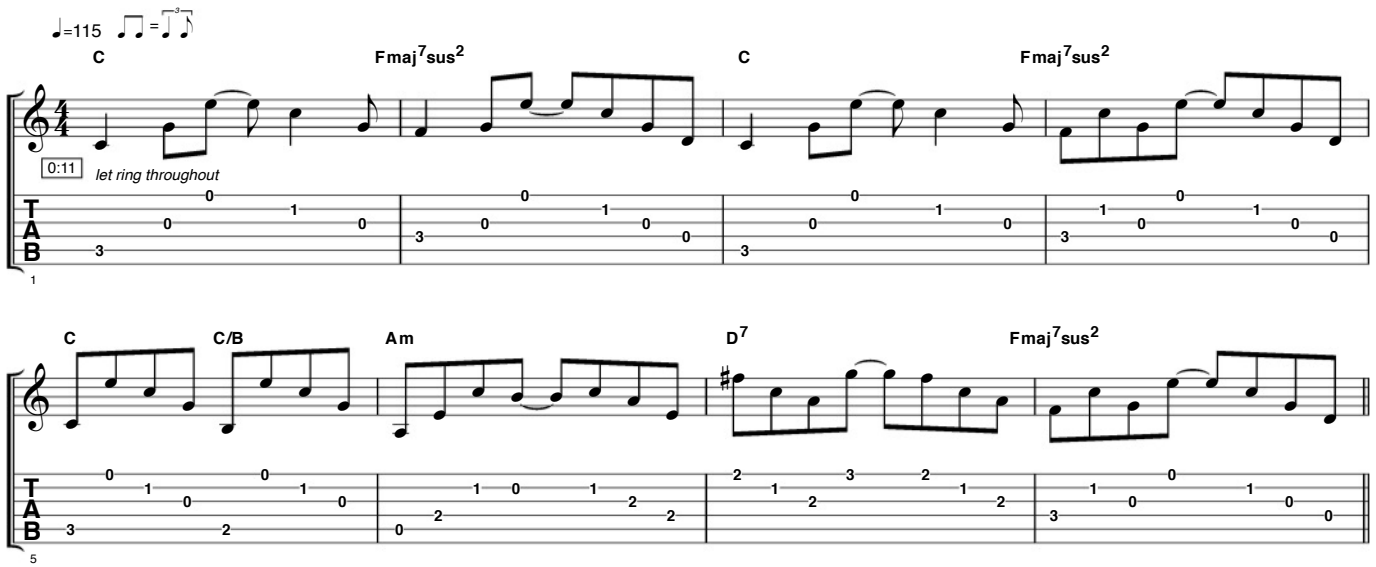
Pre-chorus
Am C E7
So here I go, I'm still scratching
Am
around in the same old hole
Fmaj7 D7
My body feels young but my mind is
G G7/F
very old
Am C E7
So what do you say you can't give me
Am
the dreams that are mine anyway

Chorus
Fmaj7 Fm
Half the world away, half the world away
C G/B Am
Half the world away
D7
I've been lost I've been found
Fmaj7
But I don't feel down

Break
Fmaj7 / / / / / (clap-clap)

Verse 2
C Fmaj7
And when I leave this planet
C Fmaj7
You know I'd stay but I just can't stand it and
C G/B Am
I can feel the warning signs
D7 Fmaj7
Running around my mind
C Fmaj7
And if I can leave this spirit
C Fmaj7
I'll find me a hole and I'll live in it and
C G/B Am
I can feel the warning signs
D7 Fmaj7
Running around my mind

OASIS HALF THE WORLD AWAY Intro & verse **BIT.LY/TG366AUDIO**



You can play through the song in a simple strumming style, or you could combine your strums with the picked electric guitar part tabbed here. For example, start by strumming the full chord on beat 1, then use your pick to articulate the individual strings. Feel free to be creative and see what works best for you.

THE GAS STATION

REAL WORLD REVIEWS OF THE BEST NEW GEAR

Welcome to the GAS (Gear Acquisition Syndrome*) Station! Every issue, TG scours the market for the hottest new gear and brings you transparent reviews that you can trust. From the smallest of accessories that make your life easier, to big investments, such as brand new guitars, amps and effects pedals – if it's worth your attention, you'll find it here!

HOW WE TEST

CURATION
Our product selection is driven by our love of gear. We select the most exciting products on the market every month to bring you opinions you can trust.

FACE-VALUE REVIEWS
We're not gear snobs here at *Total Guitar*. We judge it on whether it looks good, sounds good and plays well – not by the name on the headstock.

***WHAT IS GAS?**
Gear Acquisition Syndrome is the guitar-player's never-ending urge to acquire new gear, irrespective of whether they actually need it. Don't pretend you don't have it – we all do!

NO SNAKE OIL
You won't find us getting hung up on hokey mythology or nonsense marketing speak: we aim to bring you bullsh*t-free opinions on the gear you're interested in.

WE CAN'T BE BOUGHT
TG review scores are a true reflection of our experts' opinion on the product they've been testing. You'll never find a rating in our mag that has been bought and paid for.

REAL WORLD REVIEWS
We test every product under the conditions that they were designed for. For example, if an amp is designed to be played loud, rest assured that we'll have tested it at rehearsal/gig volumes!

BEST BUY AWARD
TG Best Buy Awards are reserved for stand-out products that earn a 4.5 star overall rating. This is the most exciting new gear that you *need* to check out

PLATINUM AWARD
Reserved for the very best of the best, TG's Platinum Awards are given to class-leading, gamechanging products that score a maximum 5 stars in every category.

★★★★★	★★★★½	★★★½	★★½	★½
SUPERB, A BEST BUY	EXCELLENT	ABOVE AVERAGE KIT	SOME ISSUES	POOR

80

90

79 START ME UP
Five new products you need to check out

80 EPIPHONE JOE BONAMASSA 1962 ES-335
Epiphone's latest collaboration is a trip down memory lane

84 VICTORY V1 PEDALS
First amps, then pedal-sized amps, then preamps, now amp-in-a-box distortions. Victory know what they're doing when it comes to tone...

90 LAVA MUSIC BLUE LAVA
Lava's Smart guitar concept gets more affordable

92 BOSS DS-1W
The DS-1 is many player's first pedal. Now, it gets the boutique Waza treatment...

94 MXR DUKE OF TONE
The King is somewhat unavailable. Long live the Duke?

03

01

04

05

02

START ME UP!

Five awesome new products to get your gear engine revving this month...

BOSS FS-1-WL

1 Sometimes simple is effective; a wireless footswitch that can connect to your Boss amp, multi-fx and even YouTube and DAWs via Bluetooth. It can also communicate with Roland's WM-1 Wireless MIDI Adaptor and WM-1D Wireless MIDI Dongle to control MIDI hardware and computers without Bluetooth support. Users can assign switch functions and LED colours via the FS-1-WL app. Two AAA batteries will give you 14 hours of use, or you can plug it into the mains with an optional adaptor.

£109

www.boss.info

EVENTIDE H90

2 The best of Eventide's effects algorithms, with new additions and tweaks? Yes indeed, this is a hugely inspiring pandora's box with 62 effects – including seven new algorithms; Prism Shift, Even-Vibe, Polyphon, Head Space, Wormhole, Weedwacker and Bouquet Delay. The H90 is the follow-up to the H9 and even features three classic rack effects from Eventide history; one being the 1971 Instant Phaser Led Zeppelin used on *Kashmir*.

£999

www.eventideaudio.com

SOUNDLAD LIVERPOOL CLEAN MACHINE

3 We've covered Liverpool effects builder Marc Dunn's Scran overdrive and Hungry Beaver fuzz, but now he's announced three new pedals including the Belter Skelter Beatles-inspired bass overdrive, Private Beaver fuzz, and this. "Clean Machine is a flexible high output preamp," says Marc, "designed to colour your tone in just the right way for enriching a flat sounding clean, boosting the front end of an amplifier into various flavours of overdrive, or standalone as a 'desk channel' unrefined overdrive."

£99

www.soundladliverpool.com

VOX MARK III MINI

4 A preview of what's coming from Vox in early 2023; four new finishes for the Mark III Mini range of guitars, including this 'Wa-Fu' Japanese art style Wamon Red. The term means free of dissonance and incongruity in a state of steadiness and comfort. Hopefully that bodes well for your playing on this 18.74-inch scale dual pickup model. The other new finishes are Paisley Black Silver, Solid Black and... Black.

Approx £149

www.voxamps.co.uk

DONNER ARENA2000

5 Affordable multi-effects pedals continue to raise expectations and Donner's latest gambit is no exception with 278 effects, 80 amp models, 50 cabinet impulse response models (plus the option to upload up to 50 third party ones). Donner's FVACM (Forward Analog Virtual Circuit Modelling) provides 24bit / 44.1kHz audio processing with a 23.2ms IR sample length Donner claims results in "a tone with a greater dynamic range and a stronger sense of spatial authenticity."

£269.99

www.idonner.eu

CUSTOM MADE
Epiphone

EPIPHONE JOE BONAMASSA 1962 ES-335

£1149

Total Guitar BEST BUY AWARD

Epiphone's latest collaboration is a trip down memory lane

Hold yer horses: a Chinese-made Epiphone for a grand? What's going on? Before you hit your favoured guitar forum complaining about the price of guitars today, yes, this is a top-dollar Epiphone but the continuing rise in quality of the ones we've seen over the past couple of years, not to mention the whole Joe Bonnamassa tie-up, results in a guitar package that's very different from the Epiphone semi-hollows of yore.

There's a good back story, too. Back in 1996, Joe bought a '62 Gibson ES-335 which he went on to use on his first album, *A New Day Yesterday*. To help finance his move from New York to Los Angeles in 2001, he regrettably sold it. But thanks to an unexpected phone call a couple of years back he got his hands back on his ol' squeeze. This Epiphone replicates that lost-but-found thinline and comes in quite the collector's package including a pretty tough 'Bonamassa Nerdville, CA' logo'd case inside of which you get a photo of Mr B and that backstory in a small booklet.

> "A REPLICA OF JOE'S LOST-BUT-FOUND THINLINE"

But what about the actual guitar, you ask? Our sample, which comes in just one vibrant red colour, isn't the lightest ES-335 we've ever encountered at 3.96kg (8.71lb) (although that's a pretty good weight for a solidbody Les Paul these days), but the build is very tidy. As ever we have a laminated maple body, the centre block is solid maple and the glued-in neck appears to be one-piece and quarter-sawn. Unlike Gibson, the medium jumbo frets sit over the binding of the dark laurel fingerboard and all the edge bindings are well scraped while the inner edges of those 'f' holes are painted black. Then there's that 'Custom Made' plaque, a nice touch, which back in the day would have been used to cover the holes of the stud tailpiece although there's none of those here. These seemingly small details all point to a considered and careful build.

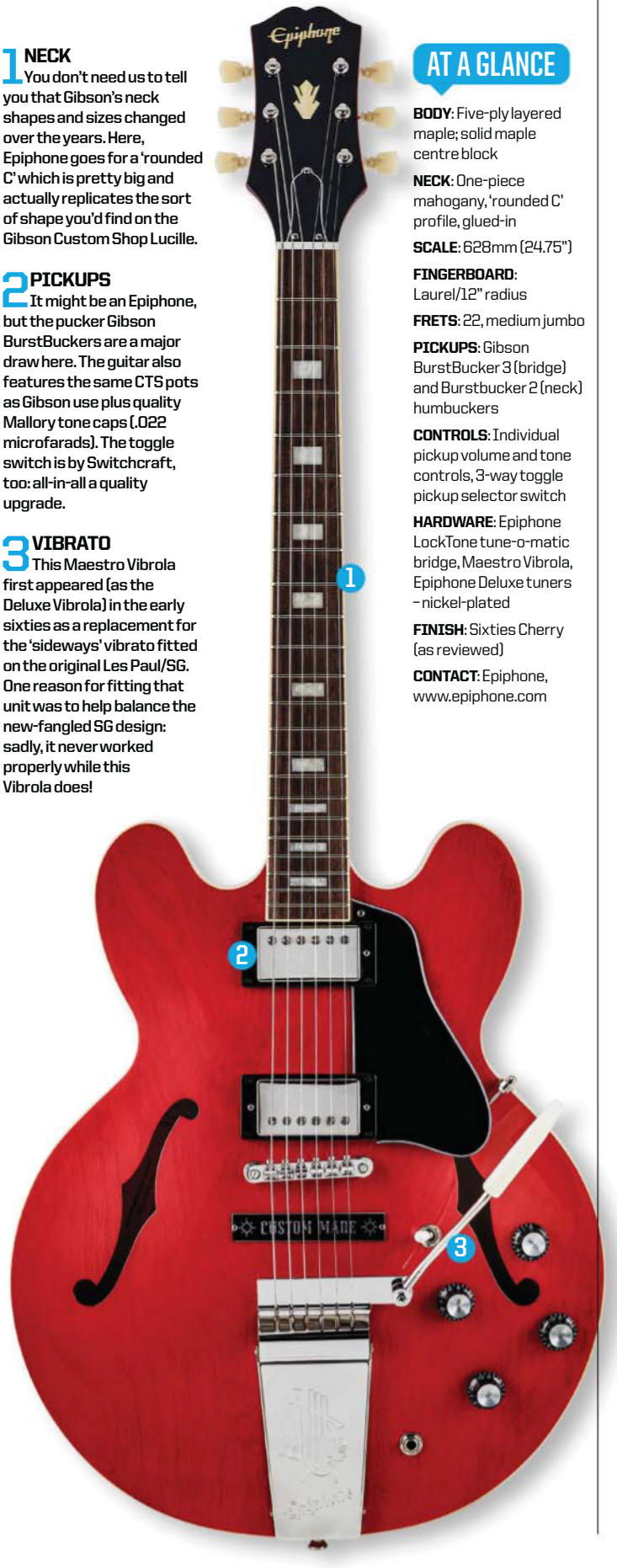
And, yes, ES-335's can feel like big old birds with a 16" body width and the same could be said for the neck profile which seems to sit between the slightly bigger profile you'd find on a 50s Gibson Les Paul and the thinner 'Slim Taper' of the 60s model. But we can't help thinking this all helps with the guitar's tuning stability which is really good and even light waggles from the Vibrola stay in tune even though the generic, wired ABR-1 tune-o-matic, with easy to adjust slot head posts, features standard, not roller, saddles. The Vibrola arm does feel a little high from the body but you'll get used to that. Overall, with a very good set-up, the JB 335 is really ship-shape and plays very well.

There's certainly an inviting airy resonance unplugged although it

1 NECK
You don't need us to tell you that Gibson's neck shapes and sizes changed over the years. Here, Epiphone goes for a 'rounded C' which is pretty big and actually replicates the sort of shape you'd find on the Gibson Custom Shop Lucille.

2 PICKUPS
It might be an Epiphone, but the pucker Gibson BurstBuckers are a major draw here. The guitar also features the same CTS pots as Gibson use plus quality Mallory tone caps (.022 microfarads). The toggle switch is by Switchcraft, too: all-in-all a quality upgrade.

3 VIBRATO
This Maestro Vibrola first appeared (as the Deluxe Vibrola) in the early sixties as a replacement for the 'sideways' vibrato fitted on the original Les Paul/SG. One reason for fitting that unit was to help balance the new-fangled SG design: sadly, it never worked properly while this Vibrola does!



AT A GLANCE

BODY: Five-ply layered maple; solid maple centre block

NECK: One-piece mahogany, 'rounded C' profile, glued-in

SCALE: 628mm (24.75")

FINGERBOARD: Laurel/12" radius

FRETS: 22, medium jumbo

PICKUPS: Gibson BurstBucker 3 (bridge) and Burstbucker 2 (neck) humbuckers

CONTROLS: Individual pickup volume and tone controls, 3-way toggle pickup selector switch

HARDWARE: Epiphone LockTone tune-o-matic bridge, Maestro Vibrola, Epiphone Deluxe tuners – nickel-plated

FINISH: Sixties Cherry (as reviewed)

CONTACT: Epiphone, www.epiphone.com

Photography Phil Barker

Chasing the Burst

Can't afford a real 'Burst? How about a BurstBucker?!

To say the market for retro-fit humbuckers based on the classic Gibson P.A.F. is over-saturated is an understatement. Well, have you considered Gibson's own pickup range? The long-running BurstBuckers originally appeared on the Gary Moore Signature Les Paul in 2000 and come in various flavours. For example, the BurstBucker 1's are 'underwound', the BurstBucker 3's are 'overwound' and the 2's sit in the middle. They replicate the historically unmatched bobbin windings and feature Alnico II magnets although the more contemporary BurstBucker 61T and 61R – as used on the current Les Paul Standard 60s and SG Standard '61– swap to Alnico V. Head over to the Gibson Pickup Shop to find out more. ***www.gibson.com/en-US/pickupshop***

sounds much more 'solid' plugged in and powered by its Gibson BurstBuckers (a '3' at bridge and a '2' at neck) we're treated to some pretty stellar sounds. These are some of our favourite Gibson pickups of recent times; the overwound '3' at bridge has just enough heat to push a clean valve amp into lightly crunchy overdrive while the '2' at neck is perfectly matched output-wise with a smooth but relatively clear voice. To be honest we're in blues/rock, or alt.rock, or Americana roots-rock heaven, and if you prefer Clapton's Cream-era bluster then wind one tone control back and you'll nail that classic 'woman' tone. Yet if you prefer your blues a little cleaner, just pull back those volumes and channel your inner B.B. King: majestic but with plenty of tougher blues balls.

But it costs a grand! Yes, you'll get an Epi ES-335-alike just below £600, but that won't have a Bigsby, or those fabulous BurstBuckers, or the upgraded circuit. Or for that matter a tough case and endearing back-story. Okay, the high-gloss polyester finish isn't quite as cool-looking as Gibson's nitro, but just check out the prices on an ES-335 from the parent company and this one seems rather affordable, and, seriously, sound-wise it's not too far behind.

If you don't mind, we'll finish there with the words. Here's a guitar we just want to play. Loudly!

Dave Burrluck

> "HERE'S A GUITAR WE JUST WANT TO PLAY – LOUDLY!"

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★½
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★½
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★½
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★½
USABILITY	★★★★½
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½

ALSO TRY...

GUILD STARFIRE I DC GVT £575

The Starfire I DC GVT (also available hard-tail at £485) is the entry point to today's Guild semi range. Highlights here include the excellent sounding HB-2 humbuckers and the 'Guildsby' vibrato.

FRET-KING ELISE CUSTOM £1099

This down-sized semi has a mahogany back that is heavily chambered and capped with a flame-faced maple top, alongside Wilkinson hardware and Fret-King humbuckers.

EASTMAN T386 £1239

Known for their great quality, Eastman's Chinese builds are nothing short of exceptional. Okay, you'll need to fit your own Bigsby, but this all-maple laminate, full-size thinline is a real quality proposition

Scarlett

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Words Alex Lynham Photography Phil Barker

VICTORY V1 PEDALS

First amps, then pedal-sized amps, then preamps, now amp-in-a-box distortions. Victory know what they're doing when it comes to tone...

The V1 series is a new collaboration from Victory Amps and Thorpy FX. The goal was to create a series of gain stages with the character of their core amp line-up. Here we have the Kraken, Sheriff, Jack, and Copper.

In the compact pedal game, what constitutes an overdrive pedal, a preamp, or an amp-in-a-box is a moving target. While the first likely has only a single amplification stage, that's not a given. It's usually more a question of marketing than anything else. Even with amp-in- a-box pedals that are 'based on' real amps, that's often not the case on closer examination of the circuit. Even if a pedal is a faithful reproduction of an amp, there's no guarantee that this will be better than a normal overdrive.

That's the question then – whether something modelled on an amp, with its own EQ voicing, will sound any good when run into an amplifier. It's notable that Hamstead, another UK-based amp manufacturer, opted with their Odyssey to create more of a flatter base EQ. This could then be tweaked, or even bypassed completely. Their approach was to assume that an amp would follow, and the EQ and voicing of the pedal had to be versatile enough to work with that amp. Victory have taken the other tack, and explicitly stated these should be run into a less characterful, pedal-platform amp. We can assume that few players will attempt to use these as preamps into an amp power stage.

This approach finds Victory jumping head-first into distinctive voices for the pedals, to match their amp line-up. This can be contrasted with Amptweaker, the line of pedals from amp designer James Brown. There, pedals in the line had a broadly similar voicing, but chiefly differed in gain. Like the V1 series, the Tight series, and JR series that followed, shared a common chassis design and layout. Though the voicing of the V1 series is very different, the circuits have been cleverly designed to reuse much of the internals. As you'd expect from Thorpy, the work is very neatly done, with mostly through-hole components. The pedals certainly look the part – but how do they sound?

£199

THE JACK

Jack of all trades, or master of none?

The Jack, or 'Jack of all Trades', is the inspiration for this pedal. The recommended valve setup for versions 1 and 2 of the amp – then named the Countess – mirrored that you'd find on a Mesa or Peavey. That is, a hot-rodded American sound. Despite this, its general profile was still somewhat Marshall-like, if darker. Elsewhere, its inception as a fly amp for guitar virtuoso Guthrie Govan showed. It had brilliant cleans as well as a searing lead channel for maximum versatility. The V2 Countess bridged the crystal clean first channel and searing lead, adding a crunch setting. It's this continuity from clean all the way to high-gain that the Jack seeks to emulate. This it does well, with light crunch all the way to expressive, tight lead tones. There's only one black mark against The Jack, and it's a concern that had been raised against The Countess. The bass can become overpowering, especially with darker or higher-output pickups.

Of course, with the three-band EQ of The Jack, this is easy to tame. Still, we had to make more EQ moves on the front panel of this pedal to lock in a tone we were happy with than with any of the others. For rhythm, it sounds particularly good when pushing a lower-wattage tube amp with the level up and gain down. The lead sound is also fantastic, and plays well with other boosts and effects in the chain. It's because of this lead focus that the pedal is voiced so mid-forward. As a result, it sounded best for legato leads when run into a Marshall-style amp set up quite bright.

AT A GLANCE

CONTROLS: Volume, Gain, Bass, Middle, Treble

POWER: 9VDC, Centre-negative

SOCKETS: Power, Input, Output

BYPASS: True bypass

£199

THE COPPER

The voice of Vox

The Copper is Victory's take on a Vox-voiced amplifier. The pedal version is the most unique sounding in this range of overdrives. It's also notable for being the only pedal that has a different EQ layout. Rather than a mids control, there's a tone cut, which cuts treble from the treble boost circuit of the original amp. As a result, the tone control and treble are highly interactive. Experimenting with the two will allow for running the gain hotter and getting more expressive results from picking dynamics. Due to the large volume boost on tap, at lower gain settings the pedal functions as a Vox-flavoured treble boost into whatever follows. Into a lower-wattage amp we had to back the volume right off to stop the amp power section saturating. Crunchy tones are easy to find, but The Copper behaves more like a preamp emulation of its namesake, never getting into high-gain territory. With the gain dimed, it is less high-gain and more simply oversaturated.

When using amp-in-a-box drives, the difficulty is fitting them into the chain as a whole. Our test setup tends towards Marshall voiced amps. In this context, The Copper got scratchy fast, and required taming in the treble range to sound good. Once dialled in, it's an exciting overdrive, but it does feel at times a little like using a sledgehammer to crack a nut. Through a Fender amplifier it required less tweaking, but again, the happy place for this pedal was in the low to mid-gain range.

AT A GLANCE

CONTROLS: Volume, Gain, Bass, Tone, Treble

POWER: 9VDC, Centre-negative

SOCKETS: Power, Input, Output

BYPASS: True bypass

£199

THE KRAKEN
High-gain hi-jinks

Most high-gain distortions have an amp or preamp-like topology, so a Kraken distortion makes sense as an amp-in-a-box. The end result is interesting. The full-fat amp is designed to be somewhat Marshall JCM900 like in its clean channel, and more akin to a Peavey 5150 in its drive setting. On the pedal, the feeling is much more of a single voicing with a wide range of gain. Then again, without additional filtering caps or a second mode, it's hard to see how the pedal could contain more than one voicing. Luckily, the tone is solid across the gain spectrum. It shines when allowed to cut loose, with the gain at, or a little bit past the 12 o'clock mark. As the gain and level increase, the bass gets muddy, but the three-band EQ does wonders here. The mids control didn't see much use, but some fiddling was needed to tame the excesses of the pedal, both wool in the lows and slight fizz in the high. That said, its filtering is good enough that fizz doesn't enter the picture even at higher gain settings until maxed out.

The only real drawback of the Kraken is that the EQ needed to tame higher gain settings sounds a little thin with the level and gain controls pulled back. Pleasingly, the pedal has more than enough gain to smash a tube amp, and interacts well with anything we put after it, from 5W single-ended to 100W tube amp. While it definitely appreciates chugging and palm muting, like the 5150 it also rewards more open chord voicings, with a visceral and tight distortion sound.

AT A GLANCE

CONTROLS: Volume, Gain, Bass, Middle, Treble
POWER: 9VDC, Centre-negative
SOCKETS: Power, Input, Output
BYPASS: True bypass

£199

THE SHERIFF
That's the sound of tone police

Of all the pedals in the V1 range, the Sheriff feels most at ease. The Sheriff lunchbox head is a take on a plexi-style amplifier. It's a very natural range of gain for a pedal to sit in. This may be an amp-in-a-box in terms of drive topology, but it can be treated like any other overdrive pedal. The intuitive gain control takes it from light hair all the way to 80s hard rock and metal. It's almost JCM800 like in voicing in terms of thump and low mid punch when dialled in right. It most reminds us of Amptweaker's excellent Tight Rock pedal, another unit that nailed the 'Marshall in a box' roar. Of course, that's easier when we're running it into a 100W Marshall, but even into a smaller head the pedal rips through intricate riffs, heavy chords, and can even handle palm-muting pretty well.

Across the amps we had available to test, the Sheriff took everything we threw at it. It didn't make each one sound like a plexi, but it did lend them some extra oomph, functioning as an excellent mid-gain drive. When dimed, the Sheriff was able to push into metal territory, especially with modern high-output humbuckers. Astonishingly, it even cleaned up from this point with the guitar volume knob. We suspect that most players aren't looking for these pedals to change the fundamental tone of a flatter-voiced amp. Rather, they're using these as stand-alone drives into their preferred amp flavour. In the latter scenario, the Sheriff is the highlight of this range of pedals. It's intuitive, has a wide gain range and an easy to use EQ.

AT A GLANCE

CONTROLS: Volume, Gain, Bass, Middle, Treble
POWER: 9VDC, Centre-negative
SOCKETS: Power, Input, Output
BYPASS: True bypass

WINNING STREAK

In conclusion, the Victory V1 pedals are equal - but some are more equal than others...

What's most impressive about the V1s is that there's a consistency of tone between the line, even though every pedal has a very different voicing. We've never been sold that players believe solid-state pedals can replace an amp. Certainly, these are no replacement for a tube amp pre, but they are excellent standalone drives that allow the player to access radically different tones. When DI'd into a studio pre rather than an amp, the pedals struggled slightly, but this is not uncommon. Even with a channel strip taking up the slack of a power section, there's a reason we guitarists still lug around all those tubes and speakers. Using a Two Notes power amp emulation, they were substantially better, and of course many excellent tube amp VSTs are also available that model the pre and power section of a tube amp.

Generally speaking, the Sheriff was the easiest to dial in. The Kraken was not difficult after pulling back the gain and a bit of EQ, and The Copper also proved punchy in a busy mix. The most unique-sounding pedal of the range was The Copper, though the best all-rounder was, surprisingly, not The Jack, but The Sheriff.

THE JACK

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★½
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★½
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★½
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★½
USABILITY	★★★★½
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½

THE KRAKEN

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★½
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★½
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★½
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★½
USABILITY	★★★★½
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½

THE COPPER

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★½
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★½
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★½
USABILITY	★★★★½
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½

THE SHERIFF

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★½
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★½
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★½
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★½
USABILITY	★★★★★
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½

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LAVA MUSIC BLUE LAVA

£719

Lava's Smart guitar concept gets more affordable

To a generation that has grown up with touchscreen computer devices within reach, the idea of putting one in an acoustic guitar might seem pretty logical. The rest of us may wonder if the guitar is a problem that needs to be fixed in that way. But the idea of combining apps to help you learn, sounds and beats to inspire you and an acoustic travel-size guitar has certainly got us intrigued about whether this could be a bit of a game-changer for beginners and older hands alike. And now Chinese 'smart guitar' leaders Lava Music are making the prospect more accessibly priced with the Blue Lava. We want to know if the whole package is successful.

It certainly looks distinct; a kind of clean, futuristic, somewhat toy-like vision of a classical guitar. And it'll gladly hang around your lounge furnishings without offending anyone too; ours matches a matte Ice Blue top and back with Ocean Blue sides, and then there's the unusual soundhole placement. While Lava's ME 3 smart guitar is made of carbon fiber, the Blue Lava brings down the cost by using high-pressure laminate.

The body is deeper than we were expecting from a 23.5" scale guitar and offers deep bass response acoustically as a result. The sound character is on the softer, warm side with tempered highs rather than mid-leaning and punchy. This is quite different than most of the acoustic travel guitar competition we've tried in feel; the tension is friendly for beginners but the action is too high on our test guitar in our opinion, due to the nut and bridge heights; which would need to be removed and sanded down to lower. Not ideal on a guitar of this price.

The HILAVA system running the software show offers a tuner, metronome, recorder, looper, practice exercises and FreeBoost 2.0 effects actuator. That last features means you can use 38 effects presets, most without plugging the guitar in (some like the IRs and Slow Gear effect are line-out activated only). They're fun to explore and at first these sounds seem much wider than similar technology we've seen from Yamaha's TransAcoustic guitars and, initially even the retro-fit ToneWoodAmp, but the Blue Lava doesn't offer acoustic/effect blend control or editing over effect parameters that the latter's does, and the sounds themselves aren't on that level for us.

The touchscreen's ongoing usability is understandably a vital component to the asking price here. The effects certainly create an inspiring, self contained tool to have for a travel/house guitar. The app exercises on beginner essentials like chord transitions and scales are a nice touch, and the looper works well but the playback volume isn't loud enough to jam along with. The concept here is definitely promising but the reality isn't quite as exciting for us yet.

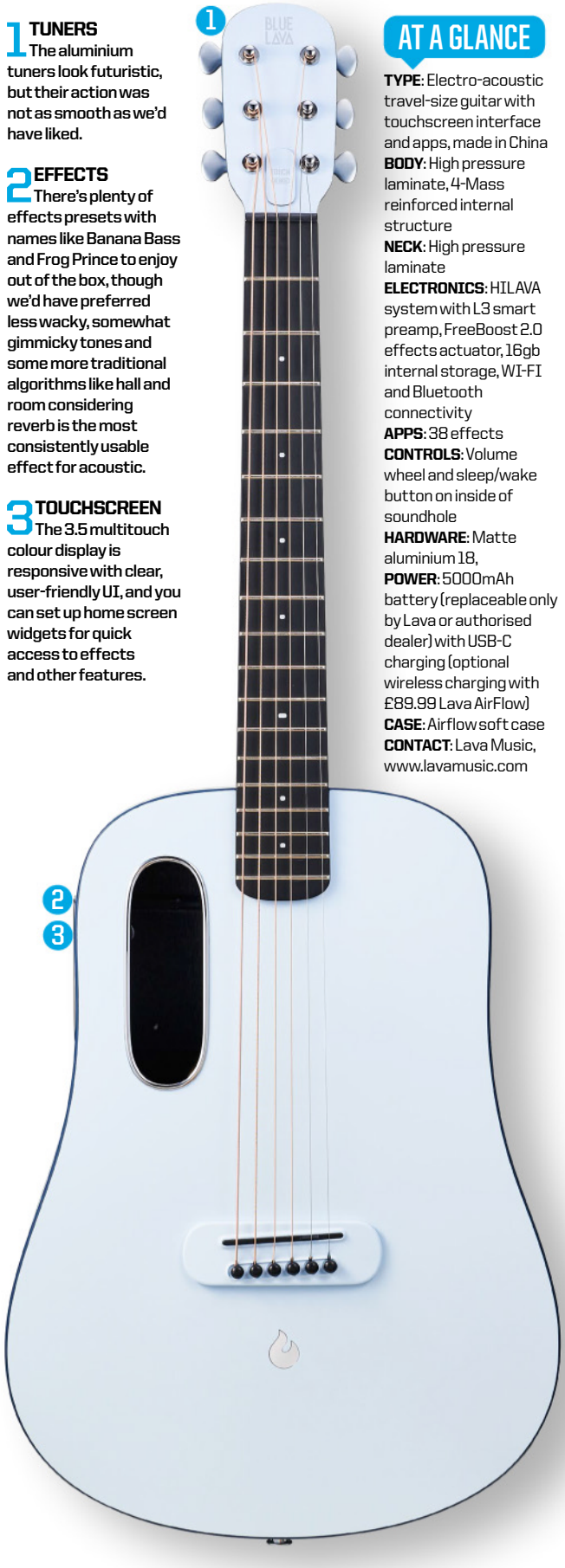
Rob Laing

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★½
SOUND QUALITY	★★★½
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★
BUILD QUALITY	★★★½
PLAYABILITY	★★★
OVERALL RATING	★★★½

1 TUNERS
The aluminium tuners look futuristic, but their action was not as smooth as we'd have liked.

2 EFFECTS
There's plenty of effects presets with names like Banana Bass and Frog Prince to enjoy out of the box, though we'd have preferred less wacky, somewhat gimmicky tones and some more traditional algorithms like hall and room considering reverb is the most consistently usable effect for acoustic.

3 TOUCHSCREEN
The 3.5 multitouch colour display is responsive with clear, user-friendly UI, and you can set up home screen widgets for quick access to effects and other features.



AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Electro-acoustic travel-size guitar with touchscreen interface and apps, made in China
BODY: High pressure laminate, 4-Mass reinforced internal structure
NECK: High pressure laminate
ELECTRONICS: HILAVA system with L3 smart preamp, FreeBoost 2.0 effects actuator, 16gb internal storage, WI-FI and Bluetooth connectivity
APPS: 38 effects
CONTROLS: Volume wheel and sleep/wake button on inside of soundhole
HARDWARE: Matte aluminium 18,
POWER: 5000mAh battery (replaceable only by Lava or authorised dealer) with USB-C charging (optional wireless charging with £89.99 Lava AirFlow)
CASE: Airflow soft case
CONTACT: Lava Music, www.lavamusic.com

Photography Phil Barker

TONE
DIST
INPUT
OUTPUT
Distortion
DS-1W
BOSS
技 WAZA CRAFT

1 MODE SWITCH Custom mode is the place to be; set the switch and forget it...

2 TONE CONTROL The flexible tilt control of the original remains here.

3 DISTORTION CONTROL With a humbucker-equipped guitar, you will need to pull the distortion back.

BOSS DS-1W £150

The DS-1 is many players' first pedal. Now, it gets the boutique Waza treatment...

"The original and best" should apply to the DS-1. Nevertheless, for all its sales, pro users, and the records it's appeared on, a refined, boutique tone it is not. A history lesson is in order.

First manufactured in 1978, the DS-1 was the first distortion released by Boss, only 2 years after the release of its first pedal, the CE-1 Chorus Ensemble. Like the ProCo RAT that arrived the same year, it used two hard-clipping diodes for an aggressive edge.

> "A CHANCE TO BUY A BOSS-APPROVED MODDED DS-1"

This became known as 'distortion', rather than the smoother 'overdrive' of soft-clipping stompboxes. The DS-1 was not op-amp based. Instead, it used the Toshiba TA7136AP pre-amplifier, for a gritty and warm overdrive tone.

In 1994 this changed. The Toshiba pre-amp became harder to source, so the circuit was redesigned. All three post-1994 models would share the same circuit, and in turn, quirks. First, they were not very loud, a problem most noticeable in the 1994 block. Second, they had significant noise at higher gain settings. Third, fizzy top-end frequencies were not filtered out, resulting in an unpleasant 'waspy' edge to the distortion tone. This led many players, as well as companies like Analogman, to mod the stock unit.

The great irony of the DS-1W is that the 'standard' setting is a faithful replication of the DS-1. The post-1994 DS-1. The 'custom' setting, on the other hand, feels like an attempt to fix all the inherent artefacts that come with that design. It succeeds. There's better filtering, no fizz, and a more stable high-gain distortion tone. The pedal is more mid-forward, punching through a busier mix far better than the standard mode. Finally, it's 6dB louder, meaning that turning-on the pedal no longer results in a volume drop. At higher settings, the clipping is a square-wave, thanks to the hard-clipping diodes, but it cleans up surprisingly well. With humbuckers rather than single coils it runs hotter, but there are some lower-gain tones there at a push. The question is why Roland engineers didn't take the opportunity to make this mode 'standard', when it is so superior to the actual 'Standard' mode. They could then have pushed the boat out further with the custom mode.

It feels feel like a slightly missed opportunity, but with that said, there are doubtless some players who have grown accustomed to the post-'94 DS-1 tone, which remains intact here. For others though, the DS-1W is a two-mode pedal with only one usable mode, and at a price point where it's outclassed by both other Boss pedals and competitors. While the custom mode is a vindication of the post-1994 unit, it rectifies rather than progresses the DS-1 story. The modding and DIY community have already shown there's a good pedal in there, and now we have the chance to buy a Boss-approved modded DS-1.

Alex Lynham

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★½
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★½
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★½
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★½
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½

AT A GLANCE

CONTROLS: Tone, Level, Distortion, Mode

SOCKETS: Input, Output, Power

POWER: 9V DC centre-negative or 9V Battery

Photography Phil Barker

MXR DUKE OF TONE

The King is somewhat unavailable. Long live the Duke?

Total Guitar BEST BUY AWARD

£179

The Analog Man King Of Tone pedal isn't a question of hype for us – its presence on so many pro's pedalboards should say enough. Designer 'AnalogMike' Piera is dedicated to his craft and there's currently a four-year waiting list for it. Scarcity feeds demand, but this thing has substance. While the handmade in China Prince Of Tone allowed players to have, in essence, half a KOT; MXR, Jeorge Tripps and Piera have now shrunk that down for wider consumption with the Duke.

If you're feeling flush, two Dukes would equate to the $325 dual circuit King (including the optional mode toggle), but how does this £179 mini pedal stand up on its own? It packs in the same textured deep purple look and typeface of big bro, and also includes three switchable modes; the Boost is the main appeal here (called the Clean mode on the KOT and with op-amp clipping in this mode instead of diodes), alongside Overdrive and Distortion's harder clipping. We first need to dial in the Boost's unity volume at around 2 o'clock, while the OD and Distortion need it set around 4 o'clock. In addition to the Tone control there's also an internal trim pot for cutting the treble (we preferred it down to about 8 o'clock after experimenting).

The Duke can be a quality boost but loves its Drive being pushed well past midday and testing with humbuckers, Tele and Strat single-coils and a P-90 we find there's plenty of the defined treble chime and mid definition of our guitars coming through we'd hope for from a KOT offspring. It complements the character of your rig and responds sensitively to a decent set of guitar pots.

We loved how much versatility we could explore in the three modes – it can get quite spicy for rock while still chiming in OD mode with the gain past 5 o'clock and an amp on edge of breakup, but the sense of clear, nuanced detail is always there. The Duke's size also offers a great excuse to stack it with other drives... we just wish we could afford two!

Rob Laing

> "THE DUKE COMPLIMENTS THE SOUND OF YOUR RIG"

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Overdrive pedal with three-clipping modes

CONTROLS: Volume, Gain, Tone, internal trim pot (turning clockwise cuts more treble).

SOCKETS: Input, output, power

TRUE BYPASS: Yes

POWER: 9v-18v PSU (running in the latter can offer extra clarity and headroom), 6mA

CONTACT: harleybenton.com

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★★
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★½
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★½
USABILITY	★★★★★
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½

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Words Ellie Rogers

TUK SMITH

Over the last few years, bandleader, guitarist and rock 'n' roll resurrector Tuk Smith has experienced his share of disappointments. His previous band, Biters, were forced into dissolution by ongoing squabbles with their label, and in 2020, just when the newly formed Tuk Smith & The Restless Hearts were preparing to tour with Def Leppard and Mötley Crüe, the world came to a standstill.

Now, things are looking brighter for Tuk with the release of *Ballad Of A Misspent Youth*, an eight-song retro-chic explosion he describes as "my ode to myself, my friends and future generations of beautiful f*ck-ups."

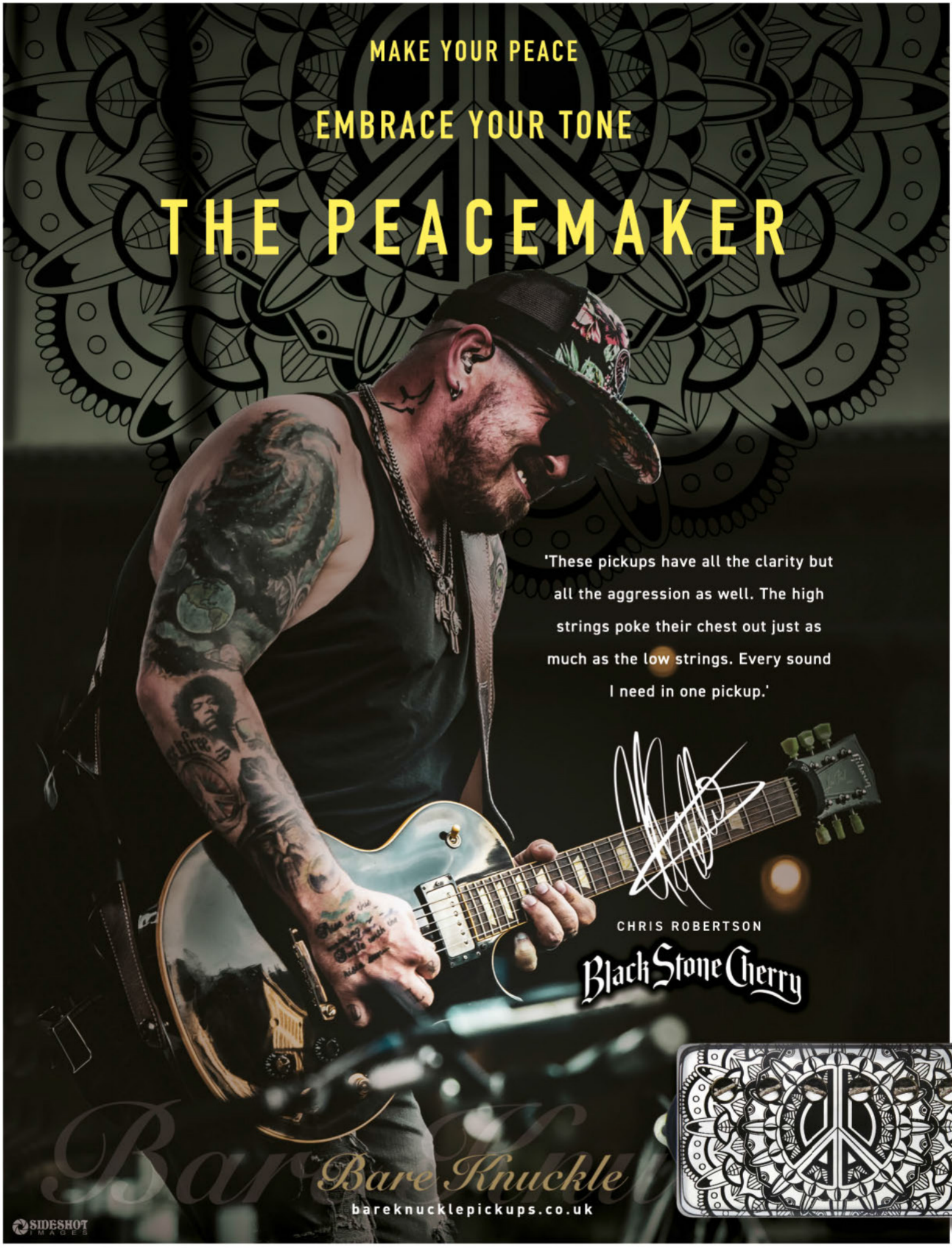
Having spent his formative years as a disciple of The Clash, Buzzcocks and the New York Dolls, his interests evolved into a love of British glam rock, which echoes throughout the album - as well as homages to the harmonised soloing of Thin Lizzy and the tasteful melodies of Steely Dan and Lindsey Buckingham.

The Nashville-based guitarist's love of 70s bands naturally extends to a love of instruments of a similar vintage, and the gem of his "weird quirky stuff" collection is a cherry red 1973 'Lawsuit' Flying V that can be heard on gritty rocker *Ain't For The Faint*. "I'm pretty sure it was made in the Gibson Factory but it's an Ibanez," he says. "It sounds phenomenal and it's been beat to hell."

His two main writing tools are a battered 1979 Yamaha acoustic and a Harmony from the early 1970s - not unlike the one Jimmy Page used to compose *Stairway To Heaven*. "The golden age of fashion and guitars was the 60s, the 70s and a little bit of the 80s,'' says Tuk, who looks the part as much as he sounds it. "A lot of the best gear for recording was made then."

His secret weapons of tone are "small department store amps", and to give the record its authentic feel he cranked a handful of late 60s Silvertones, a 70s Marshall Bluesbreaker and a Gibson 1x12" combo that once belonged to Aerosmith's Joe Perry.

Although he likes to keep the rhythm tracks simple, Smith confesses to being a "huge pedal enthusiast" when it comes to solos, with two stars of his nostalgic-as-heck 'board being a well-stomped-on Electro-Harmonix Stereo Memory Man and an original Polychorus. Having meticulously workshopped the generous glut of guitar parts before hitting the studio, he laughs: "I made it a point to put guitar solos in every song. The one sh*tty review I got actually complained about that!"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